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56th year of publication

Governments should help provide more affordable housing

Alan Doerksen

WATERLOO, Ont. — Canada's major cities are facing a housing crisis and all levels of government need to be doing more to provide affordable housing across Canada, according to two non-profit housing agencies and the president of a private building developer.

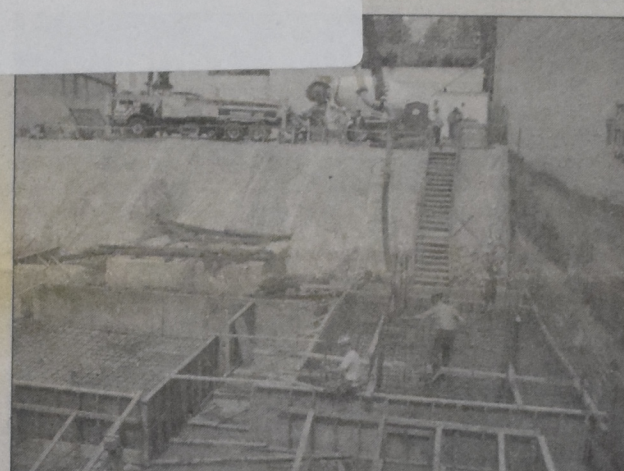
"Having a strong country means providing for needs — shelter is one of them," asserts Carolyn Bouius, major gift officer with Habitat for Humanity's Canadian office, in Waterloo, Ont. A good long-term solution to Canada's affordable housing shortage is partnerships between governments, faith groups and builders, she says.

'In crisis mode'

Canada's larger cities are "in crisis mode for affordable housing," contends Bouius. Cities with the greatest housing shortage are Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Kitchener/Waterloo, she says. The shortages in Ottawa and Kitchener are especially because of "tremendous growth ... because of high-tech industries."



Lorne Epp (left) and Don Kroeker at the groundbreaking for MCC Housing's Candela Place, in Vancouver. At right, construction proceeds.



DON KROEKER PHOTOS

The government of Ontario cut off assistance for affordable housing in 1995, soon after it was first elected, according to a recent column by builder-developer Mitchell Cohen, in the *Globe and Mail*. Now, only two provinces offer assistance for affordable housing: British Columbia and Quebec,

reports Don Kroeker, new projects manager for the Richmond, B.C., based Mennonite Central Committee Housing.

Government has a role

The Ontario government does have a role to play in providing housing, Bouius contends. Habitat

often contacts the three levels of government to ask for donations of land. But Habitat does not accept government funds for its building work. The municipal government of Kitchener-Waterloo has been co-operative in donating land and services to Habitat, she notes.

Habitat's mission is: "To

provide affordable and adequate housing for God's people in need by mobilizing local communities, volunteers, and material and financial resources in wide-ranging, inclusive partnerships and to support, encourage, and empower those affiliates to build affordable

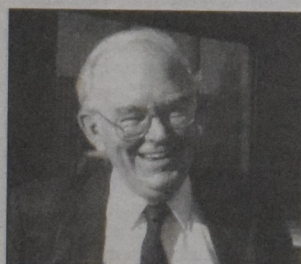
See **AFFORDABLE** page 2...

Vandezande named to Order of Canada

Margaret Dinsdale

TORONTO — After a lifetime dedicated to social justice for all people, most notably as executive director then national public affairs director for Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), Gerald Vandezande was appointed to the Order of Canada as a Member on May 30, 2001. The investiture will likely take place in October.

The Governor-General's web site states that "[he] is a powerful and respected voice for social justice.... He worked effectively with different levels of govern-



CCF/LES

Gerald Vandezande

ment in policy areas such as Aboriginal, minority and refugee rights, education, environmental

issues and economic development. Also active throughout his life as a volunteer, he is known for bringing together different groups to work for the benefit of society's underprivileged."

Overwhelmed, speechless

When the registered letter arrived, Vandezande, a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Scarborough, Ontario, was "overwhelmed" and rendered speechless for one of the few times in his life. He admits that it took a few weeks to "process" this "privilege" and "honor." But he

immediately started reflecting on those who inspired his life such as his parents, who hid Jews during WWII in their village of Heiligerlee in the northeastern part of the Netherlands.

He also frequently mentions Martin Luther King Jr., the assassinated U.S. civil rights leader who insisted on change by peaceful means. But there is one to whom he attributes much of the support he received since arriving in Canada on July 22, 1951.

"In all of this, I am deeply blessed by a person whom I truly love," he said in an interview. "The

caring love and deep loyalty from my wife Wynne, which is shaped by a faith-filled commitment to myself, has been a dynamic presence in my life. I'm sure I couldn't have done it without her, our daughters, our friends and our relatives."

He credits Wynne with keeping him in touch with basic human needs through her experiences as a social worker concerned with the needs of the elderly.

And "all of this" is varied indeed. There were the three decades spent at CPJ which saw him

See **VANDEZANDE** page 2...

News

Affordable housing agencies advocate co-operation with government

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homes in partnership with needy families."

Habitat also co-operates with some companies. "We have partnership with companies, usually through donations of materials or cash," says Bouius. These companies include Home Depot Canada and RBC Investments. But partnerships with companies must not "impinge on our mission," insists Bouius. Private building developers sometimes offer their expertise to or work as volunteers with Habitat, but projects are not built in tandem with these companies.

The agency also partners with faith groups, some of which provide volunteers for Habitat's building projects.

Homelessness results

In the *Globe*, Cohen explained the Ontario government's theory of why it should get out of the affordable housing business: "The theory goes that if government gets out of the way, market forces will respond to demand and the private sector will build what people need. Well, here we are, six years later. Six years in which Ottawa and most provinces spent no money on new affordable housing. The result: ever increasing numbers of men, women and children living in substandard temporary housing — or on the street."

About 10 years ago, the federal government abandoned a program of building affordable housing, downloading responsibility for housing to the provinces. Since



Habitat for Humanity volunteers build a house in Toronto.

then, some, such as the Ontario government, have downloaded this responsibility to municipalities.

Cohen's company tried to build affordable housing together with a non-profit agency last year, but ran into a stumbling block which was a provincial government rule against providing incentives to the private sector. "To its credit, the government of Mississauga agreed to a 'fast-track' approvals process for rental housing, but wouldn't waive levies or fees unless the province matched its contribution," wrote Cohen. "Queen's Park [the Ontario government] thanked us for our ideas, while the feds told us they were working on their own program."

Instead, Cohen's company built 350 new rental townhouses by itself, though Cohen admits they are not affordable "to, say, a family trying to live on less than \$2,000 a month."

Cohen recommends that governments provide incentives to builders to create more affordable housing, such as waiving property

taxes for a building.

"We all have to recognize shelter as a fundamental human need, and to commit the resources to ensure that each of us has a safe, secure and affordable place to call home," asserts Cohen.

Private sector builds ghettos

If there is to be adequate affordable housing in Canada, "what it takes is a political will from all three levels of government," contends MCC Housing's Kroeker. "It's a challenge" to have such co-operation, he says. "That comes from political pressure."

Unlike Ontario, B.C.'s government has continued to support affordable housing, says Kroeker. But with the newly-elected Liberal government, there might be changes. Recently, the B.C. Government removed the board and replaced the chair of the government agency B.C. Housing, Kroeker notes.

"Our provincial government is looking toward supported seniors'

housing ... they're leaning away from family housing, which is a concern for me.... The government should continue with the program at the level they have had," he asserts.

Although Kroeker finds Cohen's ideas about partnerships between builders, non-profit agencies and governments interesting, he says "If you leave affordable housing to the private sector, you build ghettos.... The numbers do not add up to a profit. No for-profit company is going to build something it can't sustain financially." Partnerships between builder and non-profits are "only possible with the co-operation of some level of government," he contends. "We haven't encountered a business willing to forego profits. There has to be an incentive. That incentive needs to come from the public sector."

MCC Housing gets some funding from the province, and some from the federal government's Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Vancouver is pro-active

Some municipalities have been supportive of MCC Housing's work. "The city of Vancouver is quite pro-active," says Kroeker. "The two projects we have under way are both in Vancouver, and the land was donated by the city." But he adds, "Other municipalities are less pro-active with their development. From a re-zoning perspective, some municipalities are quite difficult to work with."

Vancouver is an expensive city to live in, and building affordable housing there is "completely impossible to fund unless it's subsidized," Kroeker asserts.

A long-term commitment

At the federal level, says Kroeker, "a couple of years ago, Jean Chretien announced homelessness is a concern." There is currently a three-year government program designed to address the issue of homelessness, he says, but the program has been "very reluctant to provide dollars for housing." He criticizes the program because "it's short-term — it's only three years. Housing is a long-term commitment policy." Affordable housing "really needs to be spearheaded by the federal government," he contends.

Currently, MCC Housing is building two housing projects in downtown Vancouver. One is a 63-unit building called Low-Income Urban Singles, and the other is an 87-unit apartment building. In 1992, the agency began providing housing and support programs to people with chronic mental illness. This Supported Independent Living program is now home to 64 clients in North Vancouver.

MCC Housing's mission is to be "a housing provider, advocate and resource group for people affected by low incomes and housing needs. We seek to bring assistance, hope and meaning to these people's lives through the provision of secure affordable housing."

Vandezande continues active social justice work

... continued from page 1
engaging mayors of cities, Members of Parliament and provincial premiers in dialogue on issues as diverse as the economy, trade, poverty, Aboriginal rights and the environment among others, always stressing non-partisan solutions.

He was also an assistant producer for Vision TV, was a member of the advisory committee, and appeared on-air in two interviews himself. He interviewed many noted Canadians as a radio host, was executive secretary of the Christian Labour Association of Canada for ten years, and was a member of the general council of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Author of four books

Vandezande is also the author of four books: *Christians in the Crisis: Toward Responsible*

Citizenship, published by the Anglican Book Centre, *Let Justice Flow!* about justice in a wounded world, *Political Action in an Era of Budget Cuts*, and *Justice, Not Just Us* published by the Public Justice Resource Centre. His prolific pen also created many articles for *Christian Courier*, *The Catalyst*, *Catholic New Times*, *Anglican Journal*, *Catholic Register*, *Toronto Star*, *ChristianWeek* and others.

The cover of his book *Justice, Not Just Us* was endorsed by politicians and religious leaders, testament to his ability to reach out to all people regardless of socio-economic status, religion, political persuasion or race.

Bill Blaikie, federal NDP House Leader and United Church minister, in his blurb on the back cover of the book, provides a justification of Vandezande's work:

"[He] is one who has always preached and practised that freedom of the Gospel which enables us to actively avoid the twin evils of a politics divorced from faith, or a faith divorced from politics."

A spirit moved by fairness

At the time of publication, Charles Pascal, executive director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, said in an interview:

"This book combines a commitment to progressive and timely policies and how to get those in power to engage in effective reciprocal dialogue. I think Gerald's extraordinary contributions are informed by the fact that he has a strong mind for policy as well as a heart filled with love and a spirit moved by equity and fairness."

On his 65th birthday in 1998, on Christmas Day no less, Vandezande retired from CPJ, but

it's difficult to tell the difference between then and now. Despite a series of strokes that have tired him somewhat, he is still active on the political front. The spring of 2001 saw a victory for his efforts as government co-ordinator for the Ontario Multi-Faith Coalition for Equity in Education come to fruition with the announcement of school fee credits for religious schools in the Ontario budget.

Concerned about poverty

He is also involved with the Campaign Against Child Poverty, a coalition of people, faith groups and organizations, which has launched a series of newspaper ads calling for all elected officials to do what they can to ease the plight of children and their families who live in poverty in Canada.

The man who calls being a Canadian citizen by "choice and

conviction" a "privilege," is still deeply concerned with "our needy neighbors."

"I am troubled that people have no place to make their home," he said. "It was one thing for people to be homeless during World War II. But here we have one of the most peaceful and prosperous periods in history, and we have people who are homeless and hungry. There is no explanation for this, no excuse. It's unconscionable that politicians and people who have the power to do more don't. Hope is not an optimistic notion, it is the energy to fight, not to subdue, but to help establish a better and more peaceful world."

And so it goes with Vandezande. Though the body sometimes lets him down, his mind and heart are still engaged with issues that affect all people.

(See related story on page 5)

News

Christians want discrimination against Dalits on UN racism agenda

Anto Akkara

NEW DELHI, India (ENI) — Indian Christians are at the forefront of a campaign to place discrimination against India's lower caste Dalit community — once known as "untouchables" — on the agenda of a major UN conference on racism that began in South Africa at the end of August.

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), which groups 29 Orthodox and Protestant denominations, called on the government to support the demand for caste discrimination to be discussed at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerance which opened in Durban, South Africa, August 31.

Such a stance, said the NCCI in an earlier statement, would be "consistent" with the support India had given to the campaign against apartheid in South Africa.

However, the Indian government is steadfastly opposed to the issue of caste discrimination being discussed at the gathering. It says that the caste issue is not the same as racism and that any discrimination on the basis of caste should be treated as an internal Indian affair.

According to the NCCI, "by the government's own admission, the



RUPINDER KHILLAR, ATOZ IMAGES
India's rich classes rely on the labor of Dalits, for whom many menial tasks are reserved.

exploitation and oppression of the Dalits have only escalated with each passing day."

Caste prejudices against Dalits are widespread in India. In many areas Dalits live in segregation from the upper castes, even though India's rich classes rely on the labor of Dalits, for whom many menial and degrading tasks are reserved.

Campaigners for the rights of India's 180 million Dalits — a Sanskrit word meaning "trampled

Lutheran World Federation, both based in Geneva.

A crucial question

Y. Moses, executive secretary of the NCCI's Dalit desk, told ENI: "Caste discrimination is a crucial question of social justice in India. We [Christians] have a duty to speak on behalf of the oppressed."

Dalits comprise more than 60 per cent of India's 22 million Christians who lead many of the

organizations campaigning for Dalit rights. This has prompted India's attorney general, Soli Sorabji, to describe the campaign as a "drama staged by Christians."

However, church activists and those heading the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) deny that there is anything anti-Indian about their campaign or that there is a "Christian conspiracy" behind it.

They want the issue to be discussed in Durban as a form of discrimination on the basis of descent and occupation.

The demand is supported by international church bodies such as the World Council of Churches and the

will attend a meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Durban that precedes the official conference.

James Massey, a prominent pastor of the Church of North India and general secretary of the Dalit Solidarity Programme (DSP), told ENI that Christians would account for less than a third of the NCDHR's delegates to Durban.

Awakening the world

"We are trying to awaken the world community against the discrimination meted out to the 180 million Dalits in India," Paul Diwakar, the NCDHR advocacy convener, told ENI.

"I am in this campaign not as a Christian but as an activist fighting for the voiceless Dalits," he said.

The NCDHR is co-ordinating a delegation of 200 participants who

There is a misunderstanding that this [campaign on Dalit rights for the Durban meeting] is a Christian campaign," Massey told ENI. "Though Christians are very visible at the Dalit leadership level, the vast majority of those who benefit from it are non-Christians."

In fact, most Indian churches were "still reluctant" to come out openly against the government's stand on the issue, he said.

Family, diplomats visit imprisoned relief workers in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (EP) — Eight foreign staff members being held for allegedly spreading Christianity in Afghanistan were allowed to have visitors for the first time since their arrest, but their ultimate fate remains unknown.

The staff of the Kabul office of Shelter Germany, two Germans, two Australians and two Americans, were arrested by the ruling Taliban party of Afghanistan on Aug. 5 on charges of proselytism and spreading Christianity. Taliban officials say they collected Christian material from the Shelter Germany office, including Bibles in Dari, Afghanistan's official language.

Officials from Shelter Germany insist the workers are innocent of the charges and say that any Christian material collected was in the office solely for personal use.

'Here to see our children'

On Aug. 26, Taliban officials allowed medical staff from the International Red Cross to visit with the imprisoned aid workers and deliver personal messages to them from friends and family.

Western diplomats and the

parents of Americans Heather Mercer and Diana Curry were allowed to visit the prisoners on Aug. 27. They reported the staff members were in good health and spirits. "We have been treated very kindly and nicely and we appreciate what they have done so far," said Nancy Ellen Cassell, mother of Diana Curry. "We are here as parents to see our children."

Diplomats from Australia, Germany and the U.S. said they would continue to negotiate with the Taliban for the release of the workers.

Taliban officials announced that they intend to try the foreigners in a fair, public trial. According to the party's strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, the workers could be sentenced to prison or expelled from the country. No timetable has been set for the trial and Afghanis say an investigation into the worker's activities is still active.

The Taliban has also closed the doors of two more Christian relief aid organizations in Afghanistan at the end of August, accusing them of "links of co-operation" with the Shelter Now International (SNI)

team: the International Assistance Mission (IAM) and Serving Emergency Relief and Vocational Enterprises (SERVE), reports Compass.

Active in Afghanistan for more than 35 years, IAM had some 50 staff running two eye hospitals and several clinics in Kabul and four other cities. Most of their staff spoke Pashtu and Persian, and according to the BBC, lived "with their families in some of the country's poorest neighborhoods, without electricity or running water."

With only a handful of volunteer staff working in Afghanistan since 1992, the SERVE team was focused on alternative solar technology and other shelter-related projects, a U.S. spokesman told Compass.

Earlier the Taliban had announced an "expanded" investigation of all international aid organizations working in Afghanistan, including the U.N.'s World Food Program (WFP). The probe was designed to determine whether Shelter Now was part of a broader "conspiracy" to undermine both Islam and the Taliban regime, officials said.

Tutu Academy founded to develop African leadership

Alex Duval Smith

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (ENI) — Archbishop Desmond Tutu has launched an initiative to help develop leadership skills at all levels in African countries.

The new Desmond Tutu Leadership Academy aims to find and educate leaders in fields such as community activism, management, academia and politics, said senior program officer Zola Makosani. The initiative was launched at a high-level colloquium in Cape Town earlier this month.

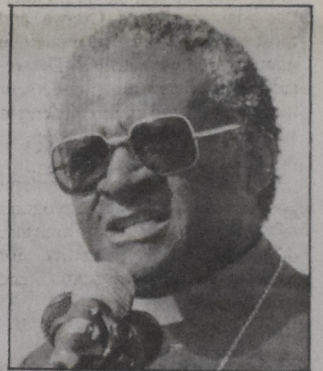
The institution marks a new departure for the former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town who, following the end of apartheid, chaired South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission before taking a year's sabbatical in the United States.

Not elitist idea

Makosani said: "This is not an elitist idea. Among the most urgently needed leaders are those who come from historically disadvantaged groups like women and refugees."

Analysts often say that a leadership crisis is one of Africa's greatest obstacles to development amid charges of corruption and nepotism.

The archbishop's initiative fits in with a vision for the future shared by a number of prominent Africans, such as South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki. President Mbeki has been at the forefront of a millennium plan to move the



Desmond Tutu

continent away from a dependency culture built on colonial ties by encouraging home-grown solutions to African problems such as poverty.

The academy forms part of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre, which was launched in 2000. Makosani said, "In 2003, we aim to open a visitors' centre in Cape Town where people from all over the world can reflect on such issues as diversity, education and the need for scarred communities to live responsibly in peace."

She said the colloquium had received pledges of funding from the South African government, the Chinese embassy and the American-based Kellogg Foundation. At the academy's core is the establishment of a Desmond Tutu university chair linking the universities in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Pretoria and the Western Cape.

Editorial

On a hilltop with Moses

Harry der Nederlanden

For me, and for all the kids returning to school, Labor Day is the last day of summer. I'm sitting here in the same place where I wrote my Spring editorial — on a hilltop in the Short Hills near St. Catharines. The goldenrod is three to four feet tall and bountiful. The shrubbery all along the crest of the hill is showing signs of stress from a very dry summer, and some trees, mostly poplars, have been dropping leaves. The sun is lowering in the west, and a soft, soothing breeze speaks in the trees. The way the air and the trees conspire to speak intimately to the human spirit is truly amazing given their limited vocabulary.

In two days, I'll get up early in the morning, my wife Rose will take me to the hospital, and I'll be led along a path no one travels willingly. I'll surrender myself to the hands of strangers.

But not just strangers. Sunday last, many people I've known for many years put their hands on me and told me they'll be praying. Others let me know by card and e-mail. So I'll also be carried by whispered words, helpless as Moses in his little ark of reeds.

A deeper voice

When you're sick and your life is threatened, it seems, the natural world — the blowing wind, the flowing river, the endless sky — acquire a deeper voice. Strangely, the words and the touch of my church family did not soothe my spirit but roiled it, tossed it

about like a rowboat in a storm. But the trees, the crickets, the swaying grasses (symbols of our transient flesh) do bring calm to my spirit.

Soon I'll be handled and led by people, processed by institutions, hooked up to machines. I'll be in an environment created by and for people, and I'll be glad of it. The fellowship of fellow believers is good; I'll be counting on it. The fraternity of scientists and doctors and numerous other experts is also good; I'll be relying on it. The love of my wife and kids is so intense, it feels now like a raw wound, a constant ache in the gut. I am bloated with words that turn to water in my belly.

Yet, today I felt the intense need to trudge up this dusty trail, over the parched, cracked ground to fellowship awhile with the earth, the grasses, the trees, to listen to the wind stir them to speech and to watch the sun settle into the trees. The Romantics are right: there is also a speech beyond words, a fellowship beyond the fellowship of people and we need it to experience shalom.

Never far from words

But I'm never too far from words. Maybe I've come here looking for some. I even lugged a book with me, although I haven't opened it. I picked it up last week in Grand Rapids when we delivered our youngest daughter, Pam, to her dorm at Calvin College. It's a book of reflections on Exodus by a Jewish scholar, Avivah Zornberg. I read her book on Genesis and I'm looking forward to reading this one.

Although, like so many postmodernists, Zornberg is deeply immersed in a world woven of words, what draws me to her writing is that it brings home that Yahweh, the God of Scripture, the God who holds me in his hands, is first of all a God who acts, who makes things happen. There are real facts and events behind the words. Every bit as real and substantial as this valley of trees, this ground below me and this vast sky above me.

I just started the book, but already it has impressed upon me that Exodus, the story that relates the beginning of the Jewish people, and the beginning as well of the church, and which gives us our identity, is not the kind of story people would invent.

It tells the story of the election of Israel. I love the doctrine of election. To me it represents Calvin's refusal to make the Christian faith fit comfortably into man-made categories. But it is not so much a doctrine, a concept, as it is an acknowledgement of the limits of our concepts. It is a confession that we cannot grasp our own beginning, that we cannot understand ourselves unless those beginnings are first revealed to us. The doctrine of election teaches us that we cannot make theology — our understanding of God — a system that comprehends because it remains a confessional act, a gesture that points to what remains beyond words — except that he kindly (and sometimes humorously) give us the words.

But back to Exodus and Moses in his little ark.

The book of Exodus begins by naming the sons of Jacob, names that will come to stand for the twelve tribes of Israel. But then, Zornberg points out, we are immediately thrust into a teeming mass of people who have been enslaved, degraded and deprived of all dignity, laboring endlessly at the making of bricks to erect monuments to Pharaoh. It is a task akin to the building of the Tower of Babel, and it's a task that turns the chosen people of God into pack animals, dirty, menial,

ignorant drudges with no stature, no rights, no pride.

Joseph and his brothers — those with names — have all died, and now there is only this teeming, nameless mass: "but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them" (Ex.1:6). That language of fruitfulness and multiplication, the language that makes them vermin and a threat to the Egyptians, and also an abundant source of slave labor — what does it remind you of?

An exceedingly strange story

It is the language of God's covenanting with Abraham. It is here in the ghettos and barrios of Egypt that God's promise to Abraham that he would multiply his seed is being fulfilled. Did Abraham foresee that God's choosing him would lead here? Did the Israelites feel this fruitfulness, this fecundity, to be a blessing? Remember, they are an oppressed and impoverished people being ground into dust by hard labor. Did they really appreciate more and more mouths to feed?

God's story, God's election of Israel, is an exceedingly strange story. God calls Abraham, his servant out of distant, pagan Ur and promises to make him a mighty nation. But Abraham doesn't get a son of his own till he's a very old man. Finally the family begins to grow, but then hard times descend on them. And where do they end up? Here, in Egypt, in a land that worships the Pharaohs as gods, erecting huge monuments to them — on the backs of Israel. The people of God are little more than the straw and mud of the monuments to the greatness of Egypt's god-kings and Egyptian civilization.

And when the mighty, cultured Pharaoh feels uneasy at this multiplying mass of filthy foreigners in his midst and begins tossing the boys into the Nile, God chooses one of those numerous boys being slaughtered, and he calls him to become a mediator and the man who will tell of this new beginning. He will lead God's chosen people to the promised land; yet, he will never enter it himself. He will spend his life butting heads with his ungrateful, discontented, hard-headed brothers and sisters.

We recognize our God in this story because he has made himself known to us in it, but it is not a story that we humans can wrap our minds around. Especially when we're in the middle of it.

Nowadays we are constantly tempted to do PR for God, to make him understandable, a guarantor of our wishes, of our ideas of well-being, success, happiness, freedom and justice. It doesn't work. At crucial moments, such a God, a God who is the product of our understanding and knowledge, will fail and disappoint us.

But our God is not a God of wishes and words, of surmises and myths, of interpretations and contextualization, though he does not obliterate our thinking and desires, but he is the God who is there even when words and thoughts fail.

What did Moses see? Misery, if he saw no further than his eyes could reach. But by faith, a gift of God, he left Egypt, not fearing Pharaoh's anger "because he saw him who is invisible" (Heb.11:27). We can hardly fume at God because he doesn't supply a steady stream of miracles and revelations, when he made himself visible for us in his Son and when he wraps us in the rough mantle of his speech and his deeds.

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Opinion/Letter

Call to order for Gerald Vandezande

Lloyd Mackey

The periodic Order of Canada appointment announcements often represent an antidote of sorts to the argument that the Christian faith – particularly in its evangelical form – has been marginalized in Canadian society.

This week, there were several appointments to the Order that caught the interest of this particular watchful eye. They are Gerald Vandezande, Henry Friesen, Ray Speaker and Murray McChesney Thomson.

Each of these people is a Christian whose faith perspective falls in or near the evangelical part of the spectrum. Only one, Vandezande, has worked in a vocation where his Christian faith was an integral part of the job description. Thomson came close, as I will note later. Friesen and Speaker are both serious believers whose faith and Christian networks have had a lot to do with their work and accomplishments.

Vandezande and Speaker were named members of the Order. Friesen was promoted within the order to become a companion, the highest designation. Thomson was made an officer, the middle designation. They join a list of about 4,000 Canadians who have been honored since 1967, in twice-annual ceremonies at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, by whoever was the governor-general at the time.

The ceremony, the particular designation, plus the wording of the citation that describes the reason for the honor, are all the end result of the complex nomination and decision-making process.

The Order of Canada, appears to be as good a way as any to publicly honor Canadians who have contributed positively in whatever field engaged them. And serious Christians have their fair share of the honors.

'Powerful and respected voice'

Vandezande's order citation describes him as a "powerful and respected voice for social justice."

He was a founding member of Citizens for Public Justice and worked there for 35 years, first as executive director and latterly as national public affairs director. CPJ was founded mainly by Dutch immigrants connected with churches that usually have "Reformed" in their names.

Education and labor were the main themes of those Dutch-spawned concerns in the early years. Vandezande, originally a banker and cost accountant by vocation, entered the Christian social justice field through the labor "door" as executive secretary of the Christian Labour Association of Canada – one of those institutions always a part of the Reformed culture.

The other, of course, is a large sector of the Christian school movement.

So, CPJ, under Vandezande, found it



CC FILES

Gerald Vandezande

natural to seek "public justice" for both those areas. But the list grew, through the years, to include aboriginal rights and an "economy of care." That latter sentiment expanded into activity connected with

refugee concerns and child poverty.

The list of organizations with which he has networked shows how skilfully he has worked from the basis of his own core faith, without being afraid to wade into relationships with groups that were theologically different, but sharing interests in similar justice themes.

He has been active in both the Christian Reformed Church and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Those groups reflect his basic faith perspective. But he has been involved in such other groups as the Ecumenical Working Group on Abortion Policy, the Ontario Multi-Faith Coalition for Equity in Education and the Interfaith Working Group on Canada's Future.

Hard to pigeon-hole Vandezande

It is hard to pigeon-hole Vandezande politically. Some see him as a religious conservative and economic leftist. That he has consistently called on government and the corporate community to repent for actions and policies of injustice is seen as fair evidence of that mix. That he attempts to integrate a God-shaped view into his pronouncements provides an explanation for what some, particularly on the social or economic right, might see as a conundrum.

His encouragement of the concept of "registered domestic partnerships", as one way for governments to create a sexually uninvolved alternative to marriage without marginalizing the traditional family, was one example of such a justice-motivated conundrum.

Thomson: Peace activist

Murray McChesney Thomson is a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers). His father was a Presbyterian – and later United – minister, and his parents spent time as missionaries in China. That "McChesney" in his name is a hint of the regard in which his parents held the famous Presbyterian preacher, Robert Murray McChesney.

He is a co-founder of Project Ploughshares, an organization that has drawn much of its support from the traditional peace churches – Mennonites and Friends. He has

played the same role for Peace Brigades International and Peacefund Canada. The practical side of his work is synthesized in his OC citation: "Over many years, both the federal government and the United Nations have called on his expertise as an advisor on disarmament and arms control."

Henry Friesen is not so obvious about his faith, but neither does he hide it. An endocrinologist by profession, he headed the former Medical Research Council of Canada for many years. His Ottawa time gave him the opportunity to become a well-respected member at Cedarview Alliance Church. Now, from Winnipeg, where he is able to tie in with the University of Manitoba, where he taught for many years, he serves as board chair of Genome Canada.

Speaker's faith speaks quietly

Ray Speaker is another whose faith speaks quietly. He served in the Alberta Social Credit cabinet of Ernest Manning (father of Preston), continued in

a similar role in the Conservative governments of Peter Lougheed and Don Getty, then became part of the federal Reform party's "class of '93." He comes from Enchant, a place where a number of Scandinavian immigrants formed an Evangelical Free Church – the first such in Canada – around the turn of the 20th century. That particular denomination went on to spearhead the development of Trinity Western University.

Speaker is thus continuity personified. He is out of the limelight now but still viewed by many Christian and conservative leaders as some of the glue that helped hold together faith and philosophical interests that otherwise would have flown asunder.

Lloyd Mackey writes a political commentary column called "doing politics christianly" which is archived at christianity.ca. He has long been active in Canadian politics and as the editor and publisher of Christian News Ottawa.

Embryos are equally sacred

"Fully human at conception?" you ask. Science confirms what the Scriptures have told us through the ages! Just read Ps. 139, or Ps. 52.

As soon as the egg and the sperm unite, there is the beginning of a unique human being with its own DNA and genetic code. Logically and consistently, there is a tiny human being who only needs time to grow and develop into the next stage of life; from a zygote to an embryo, to a fetus, a baby, a toddler, a child, an adolescent, and an adult. During each of these stages life is equally sacred, and must not be taken.

I found the question, "whether to flush embryos down the toilet or use them for research" especially crude and disrespectful. These are still human lives! Perhaps the time has come for us as Christians to consider carefully how we should "dispose" of these tiniest of humans.

We must never buy into the world's utilitarian attitude. To "use" a fellow human being is always wrong, even if we, in our arrogant "wisdom," decide that some good could come out of it.

Romy VanderBos
Richmond, B.C.

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News/Environment

Commission releases list of world's worst religious freedom violators

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has nominated Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, Laos, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Turkmenistan for designation by the State Department as "countries of particular concern" (CPC) — the world's worst religious-freedom violators, subject to U.S. action under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.

The commission also urged redesignation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom.

The action came in an Aug. 16 letter to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Countries classified as

CPCs can be subjected to U.S. sanctions or foreign policy decisions designed to influence them to change their anti-religious practices. The commission plays a key role in both recommending which countries should be designated as CPCs and what action should be taken against the offenders.

Severe violations

"The governments of these countries — as well as the unrecognized Taliban regime — continue to commit particularly severe violations of religious freedom as defined in IRFA and have not taken substantial and verifiable steps to halt such violations," reported the commission. "[We] unanimously recommend that you

determine that the governments of the following nine countries have engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom."

Of the countries nominated, the State Department redesignated Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan as countries of particular concern. Those nations were also nominated to the list in 1999 and 2000. The Taliban regime was designated a particularly severe violator in both years as well.

In July of 2000, the commission unsuccessfully recommended to then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright the addition of Laos, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkmenistan.

In urging the redesignation of

China and Sudan, the commission noted that particularly severe violations of religious freedom have increased in both nations during the past year.

Psychiatric detention and abuse

"In China, numerous Falun Gong practitioners throughout the country have been subjected to psychiatric detention and abuse, as part of the government's crackdown on that group," the commission wrote. "More than 35 members of the underground Roman Catholic Church — including two bishops and 23 priests — were arrested in April and July of this year."

In Sudan, the commission found that religion was a major factor in the ongoing civil war, and that religion and religious-freedom violations were intertwined with other human rights and humanitarian abuses there. "The Sudanese government is reported [in July of 2001] to have escalated its bombing of civilian and humanitarian targets in the south, and continued its campaign forcibly to remove populations from the oil development areas that are providing financial support for its egregious human rights abuses."

"In Laos last year," the commission wrote, "more than 95 Christians and their leaders from several provinces were arrested, detained — at times for months — and in some cases convicted of criminal offenses and imprisoned on account of their faith. Seven Laotian Christian church leaders and one church member were arrested in May 2001 — and subsequently released — for resisting government pressure to renounce their faith."

The commission noted that the government of North Korea suppresses all independent religious activity. Persons engaging in public religious expression or other unauthorized religious activities continue to be arrested and imprisoned. Since July 1999, credible sources have reported that religious believers have endured ongoing torture and some have been executed.

Freedom 'does not exist'

"The findings from the commission's visit to Saudi Arabia in March 2001 confirmed the State Department's conclusion, stated in its own human rights reports, that religious freedom 'does not exist' in that country. Serious violations of religious freedom there clearly warrant CPC designation."

"The government of Turkmenistan severely restricts

religious activity other than that engaged in by the official Sunni Muslim Board and the Russian Orthodox Church. Members of unrecognized religious communities — including Bahais, Baptists, Hare Krishnas, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims operating independently of the Sunni Muslim Board, Pentecostals, and Seventh-day Adventists — have reportedly been arrested, detained (with allegations of torture and other ill-treatment), imprisoned, deported, harassed, fined, and have had their services disrupted, congregations dispersed, religious literature confiscated, and places of worship destroyed."

The commission noted that the State Department had designated the Milosevic regime in Serbia as a particularly severe violator of religious freedom in 1999 and 2000, but withdrew the designation after the Milosevic regime was removed from power in 2001. While the commission agreed that the new governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of Serbia have begun to demonstrate their commitment to religious freedom and other human rights, it urged the State Department to keep a close watch on the situation there. "The commission is troubled, for example, by reports that Serbia is considering a new law on religious associations that may discriminate between so-called Serbian 'traditional religions' and other religious communities."

In addition, commissioners noted that grave violations of religious freedom persist in India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. They urged the State Department to closely monitor events in those countries.

The commission's latest recommendations were praised by Joseph K. Grieboski, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute on Religion and Public Policy. "I applaud the decision made by the United States commission on International Religious Freedom to recognize these nine governments and one regime as severe violators of religious freedom," said Grieboski. "The right of an individual to express his or her beliefs immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power...is the fundamental freedom and the first human right."

Grieboski suggested that the commission nominate two other nations, Pakistan and India, to be placed on the CPC list. He cited reports of escalating persecution from Hindu radicals in India, and the abuse of strict blasphemy laws by Pakistan.

Is our problem on the run?

Do you ever have the theme songs from old TV series pop into your head? From time to time they come to mind unbidden. A wide variety of things can trigger these old memories for me. The Exxon Mobil Corporation is refurbishing its gas stations, giving them a new look. Now down the street we have a new "On The Run" store. When I saw the first one, the theme song from *Rawhide*, the '60s TV series popped into my mind. "Keep movin', movin', movin'... keep those doggies movin'...though they're dissapprovin'... keep those doggies movin', rawhide!" [Add the crack of a bullwhip here]

That clever little ditty sums up much of our approach to life today. Keep moving, don't stop, the goal is worth the effort. I do not fault a corporate giant for carefully asking what consumers want and then providing it. Quick customer service of fuel and food is a convenience in demand all over. One way that big companies stay big is by paying close attention to the details of their customer's wants. And high on the list today are the demands for greater choice and time-saving features. But the cost of saving time may be higher than we planned for in the bargain.

Relentless time

Time seems to be one of the great constants of life, like death and taxes. At one level, time is simply a relentless force. Fantasy writers have toyed with time this way. Alice, in a Wonderland reverie, finds out how fickle time can be at a party. The Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit and others help her discover the frustrations of time compression in a mad cap romp at the tea party. Time pressures pop up again in J.R.R. Tolkien's epic *The Hobbit*. The hero, Bilbo Baggins, is in a hurry, anxious to escape a riddling contest. The sinister Gollum is pressing him to answer: "This thing devours... gnaws iron, bites steel... slays king, ruins town, and beats high mountains down." Bilbo needs more time to think. But in a panic his tongue sticks and all he can squeak out is, "Time! Time!" So, dumb luck saves the day for Bilbo.

Ah, yes, we nod. We could all use a little more

Creation waits...

John Wood



time. The running rush of our lives is a trite truism today. It is a casual conversation starter. The art of complaining about how busy we are has become a kind of social lubricant. In some settings it is almost mandatory to rehearse our busyness and then give sympathy. Life certainly is tough, but then we do enjoy the benefits. And clever people see an economic advantage in meeting our desire to save time. But is this all there is too it? Are we simply trapped in a rising round of rushing and activity? Or is there something we can and should do about it?

Recovering the value of time

In her book, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, theologian Marva Dawn encourages us to apply time more thoughtfully to what we do. "One of the main reasons for being deliberate about how we do what we do," she writes, "is so that we can recover more firmly in our lives the different set of values that we hold because we are God's people." And there it is. Time, it seems, is not invariant, not always the same everywhere. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes reminds us that there are times for different purposes under heaven. We can choose how we apply time in our lives. And in choosing our real values come out.

In economic terms our choice today seems simple — save time. The promise is that in saving time we save money. But perhaps we need to revisit this cultural truism. The entire creation is waiting to see what we will do in our time. If we are on the run today, we might want to ask ourselves to what end are we running? In *Rawhide* "Good vittles, love and kissin'...Are waiting at the end of my ride." What is waiting at the end of yours?



John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

Arts/Media

Prayer of Jabez best-seller may lead astray

Ky Carrigan (BP)

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!' So God granted him what he requested" (1 Chronicles 4:10 NKJV).

The Prayer of Jabez is a masterful little book by Bruce Wilkinson, founding director of Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, that has potential to point the reader to the blessed life in Christ through prayer. TPOJ also has potential, however, to lead the reader astray.

'Christian mantra'

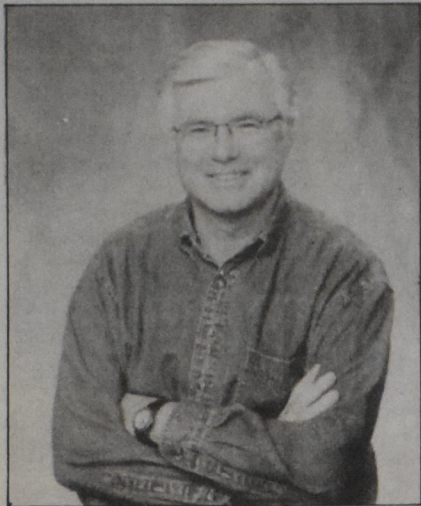
To the extent it motivates the reader to attempt great things for God and expect great things from him, TPOJ points toward the blessed life in Christ. But, to the extent Wilkinson makes more absolute promises than God does, hedges on the sovereignty of God, misdirects worship or motivates the reader to use Jabez' prayer as something of a "Christian mantra" in the context of the Word of Faith movement, it may lead the reader astray. It seems to me that TPOJ deserves a mixed review. It may be in some places as hurtful as it is in many places helpful.

TPOJ may be helpful to Christians who are inclined to pass up prayer or to be pessimistic about life. It is a kick in the pants for those more inclined to count the beans than to dream great dreams. Bruce Wilkinson charges believers to pray, pray more, pray often and pray believing. He moves Christians to be positive about the future on account of God's control of it and he motivates the saints to depend upon God for greatness. The Christian community is a debtor to Wilkinson for these contributions.

Serious concerns

It is not my intention to impugn the character of Bruce Wilkinson or question his motives, sincerity or salvation. I do, however, have some serious concerns about some features of his interpretation and application of the prayer of Jabez.

First, I am concerned that Wilkinson may have promised more than God has promised. His absolutism about what God "will do" for the believer who prays the prayer of Jabez seems to say more than God has said. For instance, in the opening statement of the preface (p. 7) Wilkinson remarks, "I want to teach you how to pray a daring prayer that God always answers." What is the biblical evidence for the claim that God always blesses the believer who



Bruce Wilkinson, founding director of Walk Thru the Bible Ministries.

prays this prayer, or always enlarges his territory, or always keeps him from evil? It is one thing to claim, as the Bible claims, that God granted Jabez' request. It is entirely something else to infer from this that God will always grant the same request to every believer who asks with confidence.

It is also a bit disconcerting that Wilkinson offers his own experience and the experiences of others as evidence that the prayer of Jabez always works instead of offering biblical support for this claim. He writes, "How do I know that it will significantly impact you? Because of my experience and the testimony of hundreds of others around the world with whom I've shared these principles" (p. 11, see also p. 25). Other evidence of this kind of misguided absolutism may be found in claims like, a "life marked by miracles" is a "guaranteed by-product of sincerely seeking His blessing," or "You can trust Him that He will never send someone to you whom you cannot help by His leading and strength" (p. 41), or "God always intervenes when you put His agenda before yours and go for it!" (p. 44). I would have preferred Wilkinson to substitute the propositions that God often grants the prayer of Jabez, or God often intervenes, according to his will and purposes for your life.

My second main concern is the extent to which Wilkinson's teachings about prayer may mischaracterize the sovereignty of God. I do not have any reason to think that this is an intended consequence, but it seems to be a consequence nonetheless. On several occasions Wilkinson suggests that God's plan and power to bless the

believer is limited in some way by the believer himself. While the idea of "unclaimed blessings" (p. 17) or the unrealized potential of the saints seems to be supported by the general tenor of Scripture, I am very uncomfortable with the idea that the power or plan of God to bless is somehow thwarted or trumped by man himself. Wilkinson writes, "God's power to accomplish great things suddenly finds no obstruction in you. You're moving in His direction. You're praying for

exactly what God desires. Suddenly the unhindered forces of heaven can begin to accomplish God's perfect will — through you" (p. 25). He also writes, "Through a simple, believing prayer, you can change your future. You can change what happens one minute from now" (p. 29). "Our God specializes in working through normal people who believe in a supernatural God who will do His work through them. What He's waiting for is the invitation" (p. 41), and "Let me show you what I [God] wanted for you [Wilkinson] and tried repeatedly to accomplish through you ... but you wouldn't let me" (p. 77).

Are people the cause of blessed life?

I am also concerned about the sentiment that man is the cause, or at least co-cause, of the blessed life. Wilkinson writes, "You will know beyond doubt that God has opened heaven's storehouses because you prayed" (p. 84). Perhaps even more troublesome for the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is Wilkinson's careless statement that God "becomes great through you" (p. 49). I'm certain that Wilkinson did not mean to imply that God is not already great, but his whole approach to prayer encourages these kinds of miscues that undermine the sovereignty of God.

Thirdly, I am very uncomfortable with the implication that seeking the blessed life is "the ultimate act of worship" (p. 49). This approach to worship is shared by the neo-Pentecostal movement and religious traditions that tend toward needs-based or man-centered worship. I do not know if it is

Wilkinson's intention to promote a needs-based or man-centered worship, but his remarks certainly support that approach.

My fourth concern is related to the predictable use, or misuse, of TPOJ by many Word of Faith devotees and other Word of Faith sympathizers in the evangelical community. I commend Wilkinson for his deliberate attempt to distance himself from the Word of Faith movement (page 24), but I'm not sure that he was successful. First of all, he mischaracterizes the movement by implying that Word-of-Faithers (WOF) seek blessings from God that God does not wish for them, while Prayer-of-Jabezers (POJ) seek only blessings God wishes for them. This is not how a WOF would explain it. In spite of Wilkinson's disclaimer (p. 24), it is not very easy to distinguish between POJs and WOFs on the matter of breaking through to the blessed life. For instance, Wilkinson employs the terminology of WOF when he refers to the "releasing of God's blessings." Wilkinson writes, "Each of Jabez's requests can release something miraculous in your life" (p. 15), "It's when you thrust yourself in the mainstream of God's plans for this world — and plead with Him, Lord, use me — give me more ministry for You! — that you release miracles" (p. 44); "We release God's power to accomplish His will" (p. 48); and "What you know about this or any other prayer won't get you anything.... It's only what you believe will happen and therefore do next that will release God's power for you

and bring about a life change" (p. 87).

I don't know precisely what Wilkinson is trying to convey by using these terms, but in WOF this terminology conveys the doctrine that there is inherent power in words spoken in faith and that God himself has this kind of faith. (For more information on the Word of Faith Movement, consult www.banner.org.uk/sum_wof.html.)

My advice to the general Christian reading audience is to skip *The Prayer of Jabez* unless you intend to read it with biblical discernment on the issues of the promises of God, the sovereignty of God, God-centered worship and the Word of Faith/neo-Pentecostal movement.

I may have misunderstood or inadvertently mischaracterized Wilkinson's teachings about the *Prayer of Jabez* in spite of sincere efforts to do otherwise. But if I have misunderstood Wilkinson in spite of my training in literary interpretation and Christian theology and my deliberate efforts to understand him, perhaps others have misunderstood him as well. More importantly, perhaps their misunderstanding will lead them away from the blessed life through prayer instead of toward it. It is for this reason that I urge Brother Wilkinson to correct or clarify his erroneous or unclear teachings ... for the sake of the kingdom.

Carrigan is the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board's east region co-ordinator for interfaith evangelism and missionary in residence at Wake Crossroads Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C.

Forgive me, dot-com father, for I have sinned

LONDON, England — In February, the only nondenominational Christian radio station in the United Kingdom, Premier Christian Radio in London, launched an online confessional where visitors could pour out their sins to a computer screen. Within 72 hours of the launch, a million people reportedly visited the site, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

The Confessor arose from a brainstorming session of Premier Christian Radio executives about how Web surfers could use the Internet in a Christian way. Peter Kerridge, the managing director, was part of the team who thought of online confessions. "The Internet has huge potential for people who don't go to church and don't dream of ever going," he said.

Before the confession, the user is invited to read Bible excerpts about confessing sins to God, and about what sin means and its consequences. Kerridge added that "confessions are confidential, and once you click the 'arrow key,' the confession is erased ... it is wiped clean." William Ryan, spokesman for the U.S. Catholic Conference, said that the church does not recognize online confessions, and that people who use the web site will not receive absolution.

Church

Violence will not lead to peace, justice in Zimbabwe, says WCC leader

HARARE, Zimbabwe (ENI) — Violence will never lead to peace and justice in Zimbabwe, said Dr. Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, who was visiting that country.

Raiser led a six-member delegation that visited Zimbabwe in late August. Requests made by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) for a meeting between Raiser and President Robert Mugabe were ignored by state officials.

Raiser's visit coincided with the publication by the ZCC of a pastoral letter condemning the violence that has gripped this southern African nation.

The voice of truth

In a sermon delivered at Trinity Methodist Church in central Harare on Monday morning, Raiser gave his backing to the pastoral letter, saying that it represented "the voice of truth."

In the letter, the ZCC — Zimbabwe's biggest Christian organization — criticizes the government for instigating violent actions against its perceived opponents, restricting civic organizations from carrying out voter education

programs and allowing war veterans to take the law into their own hands.

A very frightening culture

"A very frightening culture of politically motivated violence has emerged," the ZCC states. "Many people have fallen victim to this monster. We are witnessing murders, rapes, beatings and abductions." The letter continues: "The ZCC is deeply perturbed by the role given to the war veterans in 'resolving' national issues and by the violence surrounding their activities and the perception that they are above the law."

"As church leaders we are convinced that the President of Zimbabwe has the capacity to stop this violence," the letter states, adding: "We have heard political leaders instigating violent actions against their opponents. Death threats have been publicly made. This is unacceptable. Violence hampers development and denigrates the dignity and image of the nation."

At least 30 people have been killed in political violence and racially-motivated attacks since February last year.

Raiser told the congregation in Harare: "Violence can never be a



ALLAN TANNENBAUM, SYGMA
President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe

way to achieve justice. I believe we heard this in the pastoral letter. It is the voice of truth which I believe might help stem the tide.

"The pastoral letter stems from dialogue with political leaders, a dialogue which has been difficult to establish. The churches are prepared to continue with such dialogue with those who carry responsibility in this country."

Raiser, whose last visit to Zimbabwe was in 1998 for the WCC assembly in Harare, said that the situation in the country had

become "more and more critical" since then.

He said: "We have travelled with you during turbulent times, and it looks like further storms are ahead."

Churches were prepared to facilitate dialogue during conflicts, Raiser noted, pointing to the offer by churches in Angola to help promote dialogue between the parties in the civil war.

"It is also precisely the offer which has been made by churches in Zimbabwe to the officials of the government and the opposition," he said.

Dialogue with government is crucial

After his sermon, Raiser told journalists that while he had not been able to meet President Mugabe, the WCC had expressed its concern about the situation in Zimbabwe through Zimbabwe's representative to the United Nations, based in Switzerland.

He said that if the government refused to talk with the churches, the WCC would not be able to help Zimbabwe. "We will not be of assistance as long as the government refuses to be in dialogue and listen to the churches, which

represent a large constituency," he said.

Raiser said the government of Zimbabwe had directly and indirectly asked the WCC to intercede in the conflict between the Southern African nation and the U.K.

Zimbabwe accuses Britain of reneging on a pledge to fund land reform as part of the 1979 Lancaster House agreement that brought independence to Zimbabwe. The impasse has led to strained relations between Zimbabwe and Britain and is one of the reasons cited by President Mugabe's government for the expropriation of white-owned farms.

Raiser said: "The Zimbabwe government wants the British government to be approached so that they can change their position on the question of land and Lancaster House agreement, with regards to financial assistance. We said in principle, we are prepared to consider [this] but not before there has been real dialogue."

Asked if the government had refused to engage in dialogue, Dr Raiser said that there had been no response to any request for meaningful dialogue.

Vatican to decide if Mother Teresa can be a saint

Anto Akkara

NEW DELHI, India (ENI) — The process of deciding whether to declare Mother Teresa a saint has moved a step forward with the conclusion in India this week of the crucial first stage.

A solemn ceremony held on August 15 at St. Mary's Church in Calcutta marked the end of a two-year diocesan inquiry into the "life, virtues and reputation of sanctity" of Mother Teresa, the founder of the Missionaries of Charity (MC), who died four years ago.

During the service, led by

Archbishop Henry D'Souza of Calcutta, more than 35,000 pages of documents from the 12-member diocesan inquiry team were sealed in boxes to be sent to the Vatican.

"We are happy that the inquiry is complete. Now, we are praying for the day when the Mother will be declared a saint," said Sister Nirmala, the MC's superior general, who was chosen by Mother Teresa to succeed her.

Many pray at her tomb

Sister Nirmala told ENI that "ordinary people have no doubts about her sainthood. Many people

come to her tomb to pray."

"Even Hindus have already canonized her in their hearts," she added.

Archbishop D'Souza launched the inquiry in July 1999, less than two years after Mother Teresa's death in September 1997. The customary five-year waiting period before a canonization procedure can begin had been waived by Pope John Paul II.

The next step will be a decision by the Vatican on whether or not to beatify Mother Teresa. Beatification — which confers the title "blessed" — is a major step on the path to canonization or sainthood within the Roman Catholic church.

'Fast track' canonization unlikely

Asked how long the process would take, Archbishop D'Souza said that "fast track" canonization was "unlikely" if the latest Vatican news reports were to be believed.

"In normal course, it will take [a] minimum [of] another three years," the archbishop said.

He said that more and more people were praying to Mother Teresa and "getting favors on her intercession".



CC FILES
Mother Teresa

[non-Catholics] have great respect and admiration for her. She was a real mother who had a great heart to care for the lonely."

From Macedonia to India

Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in 1910 in the town of Skopje in what is now the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mother Teresa came to India in the 1920s and joined the Loreto Sisters. In 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity to work with the poorest of the poor.

The congregation she started in a rented house in Calcutta had spread to more than 500 charity homes in more than 120 countries served by nearly 4,000 nuns by the time of her death at the age of 87.

Fears that international support for the Missionaries of Charity (MC) would decline after Mother Teresa's death have been "misplaced", Sister Nirmala told ENI. Donations to the MC's charity work had "not declined" nor had the number of volunteers visiting MC homes since Mother Teresa's death, she added. The number of MC nuns had increased from below 4,000 in 1997 to 4,300.

"I have received several letters even from abroad from devotees saying their prayers have been heard through the intercession of Mother Teresa."

Bishop P. S. P. Raju of the Calcutta diocese of the Church of North India told ENI that it did "not matter whether she is canonized or not" by the Vatican.

"Sainthood is not the question. She was a great person," Bishop Raju said.

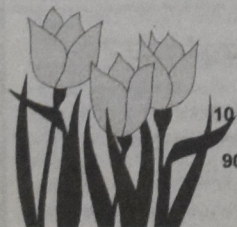
"Though she was a conservative Catholic, people

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Church

Restore trust in politics, Nicaraguan churches tell presidential candidates

Paul Jeffrey

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (ENI) — Nicaraguan church leaders marked the formal beginning of their country's election campaign at the weekend by calling on politicians to do more than make empty promises.

Presidential candidates should "make a commitment to the people of Nicaragua that goes beyond electoral promises, avoiding both verbal and physical violence,"

stated the Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD), in a letter issued on August 14.

CEPAD has 42 denominations in membership, together representing more than half of the country's Evangelicals and Protestants.

The council's letter was addressed to the three presidential candidates in the elections, scheduled for November 4. Besides choosing a new president and vice-president, Nicaraguan voters

will also elect 90 deputies to the country's national assembly, as well as 20 representatives to the regional Central American parliament.

Outbreaks of violence

Although the campaign officially got underway on August 18, election rallies have been taking place for months, marked by bitter rhetoric and outbreaks of violence.

Polls show former President

Daniel Ortega, the candidate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, enjoying a slim lead over Enrique Bolanos, the current vice president and candidate of the ruling Constitutionalist Liberal Party. Running a distant third is Conservative Party candidate Alberto Saborio.

Only three candidates are running for president. A controversial agreement last year between the Liberals and Sandinistas made it almost impossible for smaller parties to participate in elections. As a result, the Christian Path, an Evangelical party whose candidate took third place in the 1996 presidential elections, is supporting Bolanos. A newer Evangelical party, the Movement for Christian Unity, supports the Sandinistas.

Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, control over their own resources and political life.

Significantly, on August 18, Ortega officially began his quest to recapture the presidency with a rally before thousands of people at Waspan, one of the indigenous communities affected by the autonomy laws in the extreme north-east of the country. The region was torn by violence during the 1980s, when the US Central Intelligence Agency backed armed indigenous groups that waged war against Ortega's revolutionary government.

Seeking reconciliation

Ortega appeared at the rally with Steadman Fagoth, a former leader of the anti-Sandinista armed indigenous groups, and appealed for reconciliation, admitting his government had mistreated indigenous communities.

"You were never the ones that were wrong, we were the ones who erred because we never managed to understand you," Ortega told the crowd.

Ortega promised to heal the wounds that linger from the bitter Cold War conflict. "We need to leave behind hatred and resentment in order to continue forward and resolve all the problems of this country."

Meanwhile, Nicaragua's Roman Catholic bishops, in a declaration issued on August 15, have cautioned voters against believing that candidates could easily change their politics.

"Conversion is possible, and demanded of Christians, but this should be accompanied by signs of change, as with St. Paul when he stopped persecuting Christians," stated the bishops, whose feud with Ortega dates back to the time two decades ago when the Sandinistas were in power.

"Reparation for the evil and scandal, compensation for injury, satisfaction for the violated, these are the conditions of forgiveness," argued the bishops, whose declaration was read to a press conference here by the secretary of the Nicaraguan episcopal conference, Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata of Esteli.

Pun of my right hand

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget [its skill]." (Psalm 137:5, NIV)

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!" (Psalm 137:5, NRSV)

Over breakfast on August 23 I read a story in the *National Post* about a Palestinian man who was an unabashed collaborator with the Israelis. The reporter who writes the story included an interesting detail about the man's house. He writes: "A poster with a saying of Mr. Sharon's hangs nearby: 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, I will lose my right hand.'" I was of course mightily exercised about this, because the *Post*'s reporter apparently didn't recognize a biblical quotation when he saw one, and therefore mistakenly attributed this one to the hard-line Prime Minister of Israel — although Sharon no doubt likes to quote this verse in defense of his own political commitment to the indivisibility of Jerusalem. So I dashed off a note to the *Post* (somewhat patronizingly headed "biblical illiteracy"), in which I cast aspersions on the reporter for not knowing his Hebrew Bible well enough. Fortunately my letter was not printed, though I was pleased to see that another letter-writer made the same point, somewhat less smugly, a day or two later.

Quoting out of context

One of the things which this incident brought home to me was the way a Bible verse can be misused by quoting it out of context. It is obvious to us who live outside of the tense political situation in Israel today that the psalmist's words cannot be directly applied to the agonizingly difficult political issue of how to justly adjudicate the competing claims of Israelis and Palestinians to present-day Jerusalem. The psalmist is a Jew writing during the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C., and in this verse he is vowing never to forget the destruction visited upon the Jerusalem of that time by the Babylonians and their allies in 586 B.C. The verse is actually a prelude to one of the most chilling calls for retribution found in the Bible (verse 9). Lest we feel too superior to Sharon, however, we should remind ourselves that we also often use Scripture texts out of context in a way which strikes people outside of our polemical situation as equally bizarre and perverse. (I think for example of the use of Gal. 3:28 to promote societal egalitarianism.)

Chapter & Verse

Al Wolters

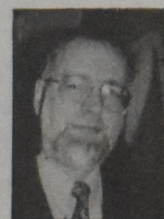


A likely wordplay

The incident also brought to my attention an interesting example of wordplay in the Bible. The Hebrew word for "forget" is *shakach*, and it appears to be used twice in this verse. Literally, therefore, the Hebrew seems to be saying, "If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget." This doesn't seem to make much sense, because it doesn't specify *what* the right hand would forget. That's why some translations assume that there is an implied object, something like "her cunning" (the King James Version), or "its skill" (NIV). To indicate that these words are not actually in the original text, the KJV puts them in italics, and the NIV encloses them in partial square brackets.

However, the twentieth-century discovery of Ugaritic, an ancient language closely related to biblical Hebrew, have given scholars reason to believe that *shakach* in the Bible is sometimes used in a quite different sense, namely "to dry up," "to wither." If this is correct (and I believe a strong case can be made for it), then the psalmist in our verse is deliberately playing on this double meaning of the word. In the first part of the verse it means "forget," but in the second part it means "wither." In that case the Hebrew text makes sense as it stands, and we don't need to supply words which are not in the original. That's why my personal preference is for the translation of the NRSV in this case, rather than that of the NIV. It is a variant of this preferred rendering which was quoted in the *Post*.

Of course, as is usually the case in disputes over the meaning of individual biblical words, the context here is clear enough to prevent misunderstanding of what the psalmist's point is. In a kind of oath formula he is emphatically asserting that God may deprive his right hand of its normal functioning if he ever forgets the fate that befell Jerusalem.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. At breakfast time he reads the *National Post*, while his wife, Alice, reads the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Food..? For Thought..??

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to make ourselves feel better,
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Poetry/Evangelism

I'll see you through*



The Supper at Emmaus by Michelangelo Caravaggio, 1596-1603, National Gallery, London.

We knew where we were going:
why, Emmaus, and we knew every
step along that road, our feet
slapping the hard familiar surface.
We were sure, except this
treadmill of these last days
since our hope died and going
over and over how he had been
caught, nailed down, how he was
framed by all the coming
to life he had brought.

We knew where we were going
except, those women, the women came
back with their talk of his grave,
his grave empty, came back the same
as all the others who had reached
their blind hands through to him,
came back acting like all the others
he had found. Were they
seeing things, this time
saying it was angels,
saying, he is alive?

Christ found us there on that road,
fell into step beside us, and by his rebuke
did he not recognize our old plodding
talk, was he not familiar with the old
skin locking him out, and us in,
and had not the blind sorrow of our cry
been his: You, Stranger, where
have you been? His too, this question
that stopped us there on that road,
because had he not just been
all the way to hell and back?

We have walked before, our Stranger said,
have walked like this,
in the cool of an evening. But
my journey began on that first
morning after: that first of each
cold morning when lovers wake
as foreigners, eyes averted
for all they know is skin beside

skin and the language has become
impossible, just so many words
hanging there in the air.

I have covered the distance
between that morning and this evening,
he said, and, setting the pace, told of his
journey, the route he had taken. These were
places and names we had heard all our lives,
but as he told it, it was as if we were
turning a corner and meeting all we had known
cold, meeting for the first time, and before
our tongues could shape Have we not met before—
we were at our doorstep, inviting him in.
And it wasn't until he took our bread,
cracked open the crust, it wasn't until
the aroma spilled between us with the sound
of blessing that our eyes flew open and we
were face to face, we were home.

Our eyes play tricks; over and over
they slap up against hard surface.
But there is bread for this blind hand
that would reach through, there
is bread for the two steps forward
and bread for the one back. Even
as our eyes do not see, there is aroma,
cadence of blessing, footfall there
beside us, drawing us along, seeing
us through, for, given the very beat
of our hearts, we hear
I am I am I am.

*Subtitle of song by Suzanne Vega on CD *Dead
Man Walking*
Agnes Kramer-Hamstra

Fishing for people not
always comfortable

Jon Walker (Special to ASSIST
News Service)

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (ANS)
— If you want to be a successful
fisherman, you don't look for the
most comfortable spot on the lake,
said Rick Warren, senior pastor of
Saddleback Valley Community
Church in Lake Forest, California.
Instead, you go to where the fish
are and you make it as easy and at-
tractive as possible for the fish to
swallow your hook.

Warren said the same is true
when you're fishing for men: "Un-
fortunately, many churches don't
take the time to understand the
people they want to reach and they
don't have a strategy. They want to
win people to Christ as long as it
can be done in a comfortable way."

Lessons from a fisherman

Speaking before 2,500 minis-
ters from 34 countries during a re-
cent Purpose Driven Church
seminar, Warren said he learned
this principle from his father, who
was a fisherman.

"If there was only one fish in a
lake or stream my dad would catch
it," said Warren. "As I got older I
realized his secret: my dad under-
stood fish and caught them on their
terms. In contrast, I never had a
strategy whenever I went fishing.
I'd cast out anywhere in the lake
hoping something might bite. While
my dad would crawl through brush or
get wet up to his waist in order to
get to where the fish were, my fish-
ing spots were usually determined
by what was most comfortable to me.
I had no strategy and my results showed it."

Warren said Jesus gave five

fishing guidelines for evangelism
and that Saddleback grew from
only four members to over 15,000
by using this simple strategy.

1. Know what you're
fishing for

"The kind of fish you want to
catch will determine every part of
your strategy," said Warren.
"Fishing for bass, catfish, or
salmon requires different equip-
ment, bait, and timing. You don't
catch marlin the same way you
catch trout. There's no
'one-size-fits-all' approach to fish-
ing, and the same is true in fishing
for men." Warren noted that, when
Jesus sent his disciples out on their
first evangelistic campaign, he
clearly defined the target. Matthew
10: 5-6 reads, "These twelve Jesus
sent out with the following instruc-
tions: 'Do not go among the
Gentiles or enter any town of the
Samaritans. Go rather to the lost
sheep of Israel.'"

2. Go where the fish are
biting

"It's a waste of time to fish in a
spot where the fish aren't biting,"
said Warren. "Wise fishermen
move on. They understand that
fish are not hungry all the time." Warren
said sometimes unbeliev-
ers are more responsive to spiritual
truth than at other times. He said
the Apostle Paul's strategy was to
go through open doors and not
waste time banging on closed
ones. Don't focus your efforts on
people who aren't ready to listen,
said Warren, adding, "There are
far more people in the world ready

Continued on page 11...



Evangelism/Psychology/News

Fishing for people not always comfortable

... continued from page 10
to receive Christ than there are believers ready to witness to them."

3. Learn to think like a fish

In order to catch fish it helps to understand their habits, preferences, and feeding patterns, said Warren. "Jesus often knew what unbelievers were thinking," noted Warren. "He understood and defused the mental barriers people held. This is the reason He was so effective in dealing with people."

"We must learn to think like unbelievers in order to win them," appealed Warren. "The problem is the longer you are a believer, the less you think like an unbeliever. Your interests and values change. You must intentionally change mental gears when seeking to relate to non-Christians."

Using church advertising as an example, Warren said most of it is written from a believer's viewpoint, not from the mind-set of the unchurched. He asked, "When you see a church ad that announces 'Preaching the inerrant Word of God,' who do you think that ad

appeals to?"

Warren said he considers inerrancy of Scripture as a non-negotiable belief but the unchurched don't even understand the term. "If you're going to advertise your church you must learn to think and speak like unbelievers," said Warren. "The spiritual terminology that Christians are familiar with is just gibberish to the unchurched."

4. Catch fish on their terms

Warren said too often we let cultural differences between believers and unbelievers become barriers to getting the message out. He said for some Christians, any talk of "adapting to their culture" sounds like theological liberalism.

"But this is not a new fear," said Warren. "It's the reason the Apostles held the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15. In those days the issue was 'Do Gentile believers have to follow Jewish customs and culture to be considered true Christians?' The Apostles and elders answered with a clear 'No way!'"

"The gospel is always communicated in the terms of some

culture," said Warren. "The only question is 'Which one?' No church can be culturally neutral. It will express some culture because it is composed of human beings."

"The problem with many churches today is that they're stuck in the culture of the 1950s — using bait and hooks that worked in that era — and they're wondering why the fish are no longer biting," said Warren.

5. Use more than one hook

Warren said people have a myriad of choices today; yet, many churches offer only two choices: take it or leave it!

"It's not pandering to consumerism to offer multiple times or even styles of worship services," said Warren. "It's strategic and it's unselfish! It says we will do whatever it takes to reach more people for Christ. The goal is not to make it as difficult as possible but to make it as easy as possible for the unchurched to hear about Christ." Growing churches offer multiple programs, multiple services, and sometimes even multiple locations, added Warren. He said they

realize it takes all kinds of approaches to reach all kinds of people.

"Jerry Falwell calls it 'saturation evangelism': using every available means to reach every

available person at every available time."

Jon Walker is editor of Rick Warren's Ministry ToolBox, available for free through www.pastors.com.

Deal with root causes of Middle East violence, says ecumenical leader

Stephen Brown

GENEVA (ENI) — The general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Konrad Raiser, has described continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory as a "clear violation of international law."

Speaking after a major consultation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict organized by the WCC at its Geneva headquarters, Raiser said that Israel was in a situation of "impunity" where violations of international law were not being followed up by effective sanctions.

Raiser was interviewed by ENI August 9, before the news of the attack by a Palestinian suicide bomber on a Jerusalem restaurant and Israel's subsequent retaliation against Palestinian targets.

The WCC consultation brought together more than 40 participants from around the world, including representatives of Jerusalem's churches and members of Israeli human rights groups.

From affirmation to action

A press release issued by the WCC after the gathering spoke of the "urgent need for the churches to move from affirmation to action in solidarity with the Palestinian people."

It added that the consultation was intended to strengthen ecumenical support for a "comprehensive peace, based on justice and security for the Palestinian and Israeli people."

The consultation had before it the report of a seven-person ecumenical delegation sent to the region by the WCC at the end of June, which made a series of proposals for developing an "international ecumenical response to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict".

These included the need to:

- Address and condemn the Israeli military occupation and affirm the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance to injustice and foreign occupation;
- condemn violence against civilians and support non-violent resistance;
- insist on the "application of

international law as it applies to the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian right to resist that occupation, and all efforts for a negotiated peace settlement";

• address the right of Palestinians to "self-determination on a sustainable sovereign state, side-by-side with Israel."

End the occupation

The delegation also called for pressure to be exerted both on Israel to end the occupation and on other governments, "particularly the United States, to compel Israel to end the occupation."

Raiser rejected the idea that the WCC might be seen as being uncritically one-sided in advocating the Palestinian cause.

To speak of the "legitimacy of Palestinian protest and resistance is meant to draw attention to the root causes of the conflict", Raiser told ENI, and to avoid being a "party to attempts to cover up root causes by simply pointing to the violence of one side or the other."

He said that it had been "the consistent position of the WCC not to be drawn into the advocacy of any particular position but to underline the fundamental importance of agreed norms of international law and agreed norms of human rights."

He added: "There is no doubt to all those who share this ethical, moral and legal approach that Israel's continued occupation, continued [Israeli] settlements [in the occupied territories], even the expansion of settlements, is a clear violation of international law to which Israel is a signatory."

It was also agreed this week that the WCC, together with the churches in Jerusalem and the Middle East Council of Churches, should consider establishing a permanent presence or office in Jerusalem to co-ordinate future ecumenical action.

This would strengthen the work of local churches, Raiser told ENI, whose energy has been concentrated on dealing with "immediate problems for the small Christian community."

Afraid to be real?

"Tears dissolve the wall of illusion between who we pretend to be and who we really are." Ron Rathburn

Rosemary vowed she would not cry and became impatient with herself when her eyes filled with tears. She needed to be strong so family and friends would not worry about her. She told herself her broken heart was no different from anyone else's and hated the painful feelings that were bubbling up within her. If only she could force herself not to feel!

Unprocessed sorrow

We shed tears of joy when we are happy and tears of grief when we are suffering. Unfortunately, many of us try to hold back our suffering tears so that we will not experience the emotional pain that is lodged within us. We may have no trouble rationalizing or describing our pain but we do not want to feel it!

On the other hand, some of us wear our painful feelings too much on our sleeve. Every new sorrow that comes our way becomes entangled in the web of unresolved pains of the past. And every new sorrow, no matter how big or small, opens these wounds of the past leaving us feeling depressed and overwhelmed.

Desensitized, depressed or overwhelmed?

Protecting our heart from pain only prolongs our suffering. When we challenge ourselves to hold back our tears we desensitize our hearts and weaken our spirit and eventually lose our ability to feel. When we cannot or do not want to feel we become alienated from ourselves, others and God.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

At the same time, when we are stuck in our accumulated sorrows of the past and present we can easily become depressed or overwhelmed by the sadness of it all. Consequently, we become afraid of life and lack the confidence to make decisions that would help us live more challenging lives.

Lack of pretense

Sorrows of the heart tell us we are hurting. When we become aware of and experience this pain the walls around our hearts begin to crack. Each time we cry we connect with our heart. Each time we are more open to experiencing life the way it is for us. Eventually our tears allow us to feel and bridge the gap between who we pretend to be and who we really are.

At the beginning of therapy, Rosemary did not want to show the real part of herself. She worked hard to present herself in a way she thought others wanted her to be. Soon, however, she came to understand she did not have to measure up to other people's expectations of her. In time she was able to nurture her broken heart as well as learn more about how God was helping her become the person she was meant to be.



Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Religious freedom

Evangelical faith develops an international political horizon: Persecution and human rights

(Newsroom) — In the decade since the collapse of the Soviet Union, religious freedom has emerged as a prominent component of the international human rights movement and an important element in the foreign policy of the Bush administration, some human rights and political analysts contend.

Bush has used the bully pulpit to condemn human rights abuses in war-torn Sudan and to elevate religious freedom as a pertinent part of United States foreign policy. He has also appointed key religious freedom advocates to relevant posts in government, notes Nina Shea, a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

She cautions, however, that the real indicator of the administration's commitment to religious freedom will be its willingness to expend "political capital."

"Sudan is the litmus test of (Bush's) resolve on how religion integrates into foreign policy," she told journalists during a press conference in Washington, D.C. this summer.

The event commemorated the release of the book, *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, a collection of essays edited by Elliott Abrams. Abrams is the former president of the Public Policy Research Institute and former chair of the Religious Freedom Commission. He was appointed special assistant to the president and senior director for democracy, human rights, and international operations at the National Security Council in late June.

Increased influence of religious groups

The press conference was called to mark the achievements of what often is called the religious freedom movement, a diverse grassroots coalition concerned primarily with religious persecution abroad.

Faith-based constituencies historically have influenced U.S. policy in some measure. The degree to which concern for religious freedom continues to influence American policy remains largely in the hands of religious groups, argued Allen Hertzke, one of the authors of the *Influence of Faith*. "The fate of the people in Sudan, and of those persecuted for their faith elsewhere, rests in part on the actions of believers" in America, he said.

"A small change in American humanitarian aid policy, for



In war-torn Sudan, a Sudanese mother and child suffer the effects of sickness.

instance, can have a bigger impact than the actions of all the NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) put together."

Religious freedom advocates launched a wide-ranging campaign against the Islamic government of Sudan, engaged in an 18-year civil war with the southern part of the country and accused of conducting a religious genocide against animists, Christians, and Muslims of a different doctrinal stripe than the ruling elites. This campaign culminated in the passage of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, which institutionalized the issue as a factor in U.S. foreign policy.

Traditional human rights

Shea argues that the religious freedom movement has all but supplanted the broader human rights movement in vigor and influence. "The religious freedom movement is the human rights movement," she told reporters at the National Press Club.

In a Newsroom interview, Shea contended that the human rights movement, while a potent force during the Cold War, has expanded to include issues beyond the scope of its traditional concerns and thus has become too diffuse. To issues like torture, imprisonment, and slavery have been added the environment, reproductive rights, and issues pertaining to sexual orientation — concerns, Shea claimed, that are getting more focus than traditional

violence-related subjects. Additionally, she pointed out, the human rights movement lacks the "rigorous (American) grassroots base" necessary to significantly impact U.S. foreign policy. "Yes, there are many dedicated people," Shea said, "but they're not getting very far."

Shea served as a human rights lawyer for the International League for Human Rights in New York before taking over as director for the D.C.-based Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom.

Human rights advocates dispute the notion that the movement is making little progress.

"Religious freedom is an important part of the equation," argued Reed Brody, advocacy director for the New York-based Human Rights Watch, "but the human rights movement has had some crowning successes over the last couple of years." He cited the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the passage of the international treaty banning land mines, the worldwide movement against conscription of child soldiers, a revitalization of the laws of war, and efforts to bring war criminals to justice.

Particularly troublesome to many human rights activists is the premise that the religious freedom movement is somehow separate from the broader human rights movement. "After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of military rule throughout Latin America, the relevancy of the human rights movement was reduced," said Amnesty International spokesperson Alistair Hodgett. "But there was another thread: the rise of a global community concerned about human rights."

In addition to general human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, there is now a vibrant international grassroots echelon of organizations taking on everything from women's rights to freedom of the press, including religious freedom, Hodgett argued. In particular, Asia and Africa have seen a wild proliferation of nongovernmental organizations over the last

10 years. "So who is the human rights movement? It's the sum total of all of these efforts rather than any one component."

In fact, argues University of Notre Dame Law School professor Dinah Shelton, the proliferation of issues and interest groups within the international human rights fold is a boon for the movement. "For every group that is concerned with environmental matters, there is another concerned with independence of the judiciary or freedom from torture. Such a growth of civil society should be perceived as a positive, not a negative, because it reflects the better side of globalization, an international bridging of common interests."

The religious freedom movement can be understood as proceeding through the stages of development en route to becoming a self-actualized thread in the greater human rights fabric, Hodgett maintained. "As certain (rights groups) gain advocates ... they push for greater prominence. At present, those advocating for gay, lesbian, and transgendered rights are the ones making noise. It's a natural phase in (a movement's) maturation."

While acknowledging the political advances of religious freedom activists, traditional human rights groups point out they have been advancing religious freedom all along. "The first Amnesty conference in 1962 in France addressed religious freedom," remarked Stephen Rickard, former Washington, D.C., office director for Amnesty and a longtime human rights activist. "The first human rights investigating team ever sent out by Amnesty dealt with religious prisoners in the former communist block. The idea that you can make a distinction between the religious freedom movement and human rights groups from the outset is a mistake."

A different track

But religious freedom activists make a distinction. "The religious freedom movement is on a different track," insisted Shea. "You don't have the same actors. ... They don't share the same agendas."

"Religious freedom is the fundamental freedom, the right upon which all others are based," argued Walter Grazer, policy adviser for religious freedom, human rights and Europe for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "From it come freedom of assembly, parental rights, and all other rights. It needs to be lifted up and promoted

as a fundamental right. In a global age, as we gain a new awareness of the global nature of religions, religious freedom takes on a heightened level of importance."

Hierarchy of rights

Even so, since the battle surrounding the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act, human rights activists, scholars, and others have expressed their wariness about creating what might be termed a "hierarchy of rights."

"There is a great fear of religious intolerance perpetrated by fundamentalist groups here and abroad, including Muslim fundamentalists, and that makes many traditional human rights groups very wary of pushing religious freedom as an issue above other human rights claims," observes Shelton of the Notre Dame law school.

John Witte, director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, Georgia, and editor of *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective* (1996, Martinus Nijhoff), contended that while he supported the International Religious Freedom Act, he was concerned it "created an unusual premium on religious rights violations as part of the calculus of how we deal with other countries."

"The act makes violations of the rights of women, the child, and other violations less important, since these rights don't have the same statutory trigger mechanism as religious rights violations," he said. Among other things, the act requires the designation by the U.S. State Department of "countries of particular concern" and gives the president discretionary power to impose sanctions.

Shift of church's centre of gravity

Those who rallied around religious persecution issues were largely conservative and Christian, a constituency traditionally absent from the historically left-leaning domain of human rights. Hertzke called this "new faith-based engagement, born out of the supposedly parochial concern for persecuted Christians, ... the signal story of human rights in our time." He argued the nation's heartland, home to the majority of Christian evangelicals, has become a "breeding ground of internationalists seeking a more assertive American leadership in the world."

He pointed out that this more

global worldview among evangelicals had to do with the church's "centre of gravity" having shifted to the developing world. "There are more active Christians living in Asia, Africa, and Latin America than in North America and Europe," he said. "The fact that American Christians are part of a world church is beginning to sink in. The religious freedom campaign is a manifestation of this awareness."

Broadening the agenda

Whatever the real strength of the coalition, the test will be whether religious freedom advocates can broaden their portfolio of issues, said former Amnesty D.C. office director Rickard. "Conservative evangelicals can't just [focus on] Christian persecution," he argued. "What about the torture of gays in Zimbabwe? It would send a profound signal to those concerned with international human rights norms to say that while they (conservative evangelicals) disagree on



Colombian Christians whose family members were held hostage by guerrillas in 1999. The hostages have since been released.

the morality of homosexual behavior, there is no disagreement on the fact that torture is never acceptable."

Religious freedom advocates have already begun to stretch their agenda beyond the bounds of issues that touch religious believers as such; most recently, for instance, they added sex trafficking to their cache of concerns.

In discussion after the EPPC press conference, Michael Horowitz, senior fellow at the

Hudson Institute and architect of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, called the broadening of the religious freedom agenda evidence that the coalition is adopting a measure of "hard-core realism" in fashioning its identity. "To frame our issues as just 'religious' is too parochial. But to argue that sex trafficking is just as important as religious persecution is to move in (the right) tradition. ..."

In a later interview, Horowitz,

who is Jewish, stressed that the campaign on behalf of persecuted Christians in Muslim countries should be viewed as a battle for Muslims, too. He referenced the campaign against Soviet anti-Semitism during the 1970s.

Gauging freedom levels

"As Jews, we understood at that time that the health of democratic values in any European state could be gauged essentially by visiting the local synagogue in a particular area. If Jews were free, then one could estimate that everyone else — artists, political dissidents, for instance — shared a similar measure of freedom. Today, in some Muslim and communist countries, you can assess the state of society by looking at evangelical churches; if Christians are free to worship, then you can be sure that a democratic impulse at least has a foothold in that society. If Christians are not free, then it is likely no one else is really free either. In the case of Sudan, if the West is

silent about a radical regime persecuting Christians, then the regime will be empowered to intimidate and persecute Muslims, too."

The religious freedom movement appears to have identified one of the keys to meaningful, results-based activism in the U.S., offered Henry Steiner, director of the Harvard University Law School Human Rights Program. "Religious freedom and religious persecution are issues that have managed to get into the churches the way that other issues don't often do," he said. "... The whole point of the human rights movement is to break down barriers and to get people to see all human beings equally, as human beings. But what remains now is a sense of us and the other: the U.S. and the world; Muslim and Christian and Jew. ... Discourses merge, and it is hard to draw lines. Perhaps religion is one way of tapping into something all people care about."

A visit to the 'Jerusalem of China'

Wenzhou has large Protestant population, hundreds of churches

Paul Davenport

WENZHO, China (Compass) — An enormous church looms over the town, its baroque-style cupola crowned with a gigantic red cross. Such sights are common in the prosperous city of Wenzhou on China's southeast coast. The city is a thriving centre for the garment industry, whose boutiques and shops line entire streets. But Wenzhou is also known throughout the Chinese Christian community as the "Jerusalem of China" for its massive Protestant Christian population and hundreds of churches.

Extraordinary revival

The story of the extraordinary revival in Wenzhou is chronicled in detail in a new book, *Christianity in Wenzhou*, published last year by the Zhejiang province Christian Council. The book claims that as long ago as 1355 A.D. there were Nestorian Christians in the area. The first Protestant missionary to arrive in the city was George Stott of the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1868. The CIM was followed by the Methodists.

By the beginning of the 20th century, various indigenous and self-supporting churches were active, and the planting of vigorous, independent churches goes a long way to explain the subsequent rapid growth. By 1951 — two years after the Communist Party took control of the country — there

were more than 84,000 Protestants in Wenzhou.

The book graphically describes the persecution that closed all the churches in June 1966 when the Cultural Revolution erupted in China. The author states that meetings continued in both town and country, with lookouts posted to warn Christians if the militia was approaching.

In the early 1970s, when Christianity was still proscribed nationally, authorities in Ruian City (part of Greater Wenzhou) estimated that nearly 50,000 Christians were still meeting in some 270 house churches. In 1980, churches began to be re-opened. Today, according to pastors in the registered Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church, there are over 700,000 believers. They meet in 1,180 registered churches and over 3,000 registered meeting points.

There is also a vigorous independent house church movement in Wenzhou meeting in hundreds of house churches. Wenzhou house churches are now sending evangelists to many remote parts of China. It has become common for Christians involved in business to use their travels and contacts to spread the gospel wherever they go. And Christians who emigrated from Wenzhou make up a significant percentage of the Chinese churches in Italy and France.

The church in Wenzhou is

staunchly evangelical. The two main churches in the city centre are packed with worshippers. The young lady who preached at the morning service of one took as her theme Abraham's life of faith. She stressed the need for personal faith and repentance. At the close, the congregation applauded her, which is unusual in a Chinese setting. It turned out this was her first sermon after graduation from seminary!

The preacher at the evening service at the West City church was also female. She urged her hearers to take "the road to revival." She challenged them to get rid of all their "idols" and put God in the first place in their lives.

A visit to the well-stocked bookstore of the same church confirmed that church workers in Wenzhou have little time for the modernist theology of Bishop Ding currently being forced on pastors and students in Shanghai and Nanjing. One copy of the Bishop's notorious *Select Works* (used in indoctrination sessions) was half-hidden by a range of evangelical literature. "A bad book!" said one of the church leaders in no uncertain terms. "We believe in justification by faith."

The Wenzhou area churches are nourished in their faith by a whole army of yigong, or lay church workers. One Bible training school is located in Yongjia county,

where there are 130,000 evangelical believers. The modest Bible school trains 50 students at a time. Last year they were all young people. This year the ages range from 16 to 40.

Topics of study include: overviews of the Old & New Testament, Bible geography, history of the Israelites, outline of the Book of Revelation (often frowned on or outright banned elsewhere by politicized 'Three Self' authorities), church music and basic English.

The school receives no financial support from the government. There are two semesters each year, and fees cost 500 RMB per semester (about \$60). One of the lecturers told us that he teaches that salvation cannot be earned by good works (a la Bishop Ding) but only by faith in Christ, who is the only way of salvation.

Theologically on another planet

Wenzhou, it seems, is not only geographically a few hundred miles from Nanjing and Bishop Ding, but theologically on another planet. We were told that the thorough Biblical training given is why the Wenzhou churches have remained staunchly evangelical and have generally resisted the incursion of cults and heresies.

According to reliable reports, hundreds of unregistered churches were demolished last year in

Wenzhou — some even blown up — by special government teams. When asked about this severe persecution, workers in the registered churches admitted that churches had been demolished, but they tended to downgrade the significance of the campaign. Most probably feared what they said to foreigners might be reported to government.

Although it is quite possible to preach the gospel in Wenzhou in the registered churches, documentary evidence exists detailing some of the pressures that are exerted on unofficial house churches.

A booklet published jointly by the Wenzhou TSPM and Christian Council in March 2000 clearly states that all meeting points must register with the local government and be approved by the city or county TSPM. All special evangelistic meetings and training sessions must obtain Communist Party approval a month before they are held. Every year, every church and meeting point must give a detailed report of all its activities and finances to the Party's Religious Affairs Bureau.

Christians in Wenzhou have enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom compared to many other places in China. But there are limits, and as last winter's campaign of persecution showed, those who step beyond them may suddenly face stiff penalties.

Marriage

When a couple asks me to marry them

Walt Brouwer

A Christian wedding is a public celebration of a commitment by a Christian man and a Christian woman who pledge to each other and to God their mutual love and faithfulness for the rest of their lives. You'd think therefore that the wedding ministry is the happiest one in the church. Surprisingly, this is not always so.

Two kinds of authority

Canadians take pride in the separation of church and state. An exception to this rule is the legal right of clergy to solemnize marriages.

This authority to legalize marriages is conferred on clergy by the province in which they live. The reasons for this are British tradition and the pressing needs of settling the frontier earlier in Canada's history. Here a pastor has the same legal capacity as a Justice of the Peace.

The Bible does not give a pastor this right; the province does. The Bible does give pastors the spiritual authority to bless marriages that are in conformity with God's Word.

Bound by a spiritual covenant

When a couple approaches me as a pastor to marry them, the couple sometimes makes assumptions about my capacity to do so. For example, many assume that since I can, I will. That is, they think since the law gives me the power, I'll automatically use my spiritual office to oblige them. They do not always appreciate that I am also bound by a spiritual covenant. Sometimes this puts me in a very delicate position.

Here's why. On the one hand, I want to say Yes! to the couple and help them celebrate their love.

On the other hand, when a



ELLIS HERWIG FROM MARILYN GARTMAN

On the one hand, I want to say Yes! to the couple and help them celebrate their love. On the other hand, when a couple does not want to embrace God's will for their relationship, I have to say No to their request.

couple does not want to embrace God's will for their relationship, I have to say No to their request.

Here I risk appearing legalistic, hypocritical and insensitive to the well-meaning, sincere couple that wants to celebrate their love by getting married.

Not every couple appreciates the fact that I am conscience-bound to fulfill not just the legal stipulations of the province but also the spiritual requirements of the Bible and the God whom I have pledged to faithfully love and serve as pastor.

What we ask of couples

When I am asked to marry a couple in a Christian ceremony, I ask them to abide by three things.

1. Both partners must trust

Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Personal faith and spiritual values are not a part of life the way hobbies, a career or other interests are. To be a follower of Jesus goes to the very core of our identity, shapes the way we handle relationships, determines our values and ideals, and forms the way we view the world and reality.

When a couple does not share a common spiritual base, something essential is missing from their relationship that prevents complete intimacy to develop. To be sure, they can still deeply love and respect each other. In fact, it is possible for a non-Christian couple or a couple where only one person is a believer, to have a deeper love and happier marriage than those who profess to be Christians. A Christian marriage by itself does not guarantee marital success and bliss.

Happiness, intimacy enhanced by faith

However, since authentic spirituality exerts such enormous influence upon every aspect of life, the potential for happiness and intimacy is greatly enhanced in a marriage where both partners profess faith in Jesus Christ. Also, a common faith will enable children born to the couple to be raised in a spiritually consistent home.

It is for this reason that the Bible says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14, NIV) and that Christians should only marry "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39, NIV).

When a Christian wants to marry an unbeliever and asks me to wed them, it places me in a conflicting situation. While I want to help celebrate the mutual love of the couple, I am conscience-bound to honor God's Word and the vows that I took at my ordination.

Only heterosexual couples

2. The couple must be a man and a woman. This means that I will only marry a heterosexual couple. Homosexuality as a sexual orientation is a result of our broken world. A gay person is not bad, evil or sinful solely by virtue of his or her sexual orientation. A homosexual, rather, is a broken person as everyone else is in this sinful world in which we live.

However, homosexuality as the expression of homosexual orientation in mutual sexual activity is sinful. Even though a gay couple could live in an exclusive relationship of homosexual love, the Bible requires abstinence of a Christian gay person.

Such sexual abstinence is exceedingly difficult. As a pastor I will stand by a Christian gay person who seeks to follow Christ even though he or she might fail. In this sense, a gay Christian is no different from a heterosexual Christian who deeply desires to marry, but is unable to find a marriage partner. Abstinence is required of both.

Living apart until wedding

3. The couple is expected to live apart until the wedding. The couple will be expected to refrain from sexual intimacy until the wedding takes place. This means that they not live together. If they are living together, they will be asked to move to separate residences until the wedding takes place.

I realize that we are fighting an uphill battle when we ask this of Christian couples, for cohabitation is increasingly accepted even among Christians.

Why then do we ask couples not to live together before they are married?

First, a Christian couple wishing to be married in Christ will seek to honor Christ in their daily lives. Obedience is the irrepressible fruit of loving Jesus Christ who said, "If you love Me you will obey what I command" (John 14:15, NIV).

The Bible sets boundaries for

mutual sexual activity. "God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin. Then each of you will control your body and live in holiness and honor" (1 Thess. 4:3,4, NLT).

Elsewhere it says that, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure" (Heb. 13:4, NIV).

Paul adds, "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19,20, NLT).

A further reason is that we want to send a clear and consistent message to our Christian singles — no matter what their age — that says that living together before marriage is not God's plan. We would not be honest with our singles if we teach them biblical sexual ethics and yet bless relationships where couples live in violation of these ethics.

Biblical sexual ethics help couples

We want to uphold biblical sexual ethics not to hurt couples, but to help them. These ethics are designed to maximize the couple's potential for long-term happiness. Studies point out that people who live together before marriage tend to fail more frequently in living up to their marital vows, have lower sexual satisfaction than those who wait, and even enjoy fewer health benefits. As one headline in support of waiting said: "Wedded Bliss Means More Sex, Better Health And Extra Money."

"In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success" (Prov. 3:6, TLB).

A Final Question: Do we make any exception for a Christian man and woman living together?

To make a general rule that covers all situations is certainly the easiest and the safest way to go. However, this might preclude the elders and pastor from dealing wisely and pastorally with couples; it means wrestling with knowing the mind of Christ in balancing grace and truth, love and law. Factors such as church membership, the length of time a couple has lived together, the absence or presence of children, and the age of the couple should guide the church's deliberations, and in some cases we make an exception.

Walt Brouwer is pastor at Christ's community at Christ Community Christian Reformed Church, Nanaimo, B.C.

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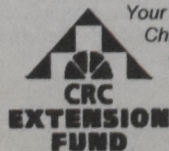
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Family

A stroke in the family



BLAIR SEITZ, PHOTO RESEARCHERS

A stroke victim is helped with rehabilitation.

Lisa M. Petsche

Did you know that only ten per cent of stroke victims recover completely, and that strokes are the leading cause of long-term adult disability in North America?

Stroke can result in not only physical impairment but mental deficits as well. Areas of functioning that may be affected include mobility, personal care, communication, mood, memory and problem-solving ability. Paralysis or weakness on one side of the body is the most obvious sign.

Without a doubt, stroke is a life-altering experience — not only for its victims but also for their loved ones.

Conflicting feelings

Like survivors, family members initially experience a wide range of conflicting feelings. These may include shock, relief, denial, fear, anxiety, anger, sadness and frustration. It is a time of grieving losses. Life may never return to the way it used to be, and plans for the future may have to be revised.

In the midst of such upheaval, relationships within a family often become strained.

Impaired speech or language comprehension can make it difficult for the survivor to successfully communicate with loved ones. Chemical changes in the brain can also cause what's known as "emotional lability" — sudden, uncontrollable laughing or crying, often at inappropriate times. This causes some awkward moments in social situations.

Personality change

In addition, some people undergo a personality change following stroke. A confident person may become slow and cautious or, conversely, a cautious person may become impatient and impulsive. Depression is also common, and may affect motivation for rehabilitation. Sometimes it's manifested by irritability, other times by indifference and withdrawal.

Such changes can lead family members to feel that they no longer know their loved one very well. Furthermore, they often feel as if no one else understands what they and their family are going through. It can make for a lonely time.

Uncertainty about the future — for example, how much functioning their loved one will recover and whether they will be able to return home — also contributes to stress. One result can be depression.

Spouses or adult children may be overwhelmed by the number and type of decisions that need to be made, such as those regarding rehabilitation options, equipment purchase, home modifications and other discharge planning considerations. They often have to take over practical tasks such as managing finances, preparing meals and housekeeping. In addition, they may be expected to assume the role of hands-on caregiver, assisting with dressing, grooming, bathing and toileting. Feelings of doubt and resentment may surface, closely followed by guilt.

How can family members keep stress manageable during such a

Mid-life crisis?
I don't think so!

My kids are at that stage in life (ages 20, 20 and 15) when people are constantly asking them what they plan to do when they "grow up." I suppose it's a legitimate question, but I wonder if it's as important as asking, "What are you doing with your life right now?" High school students especially are under pressure to make career decisions as soon as possible, so that their educational choices can be made according to future plans.

Another birthday has just passed for me and by even the most generous of standards I'm now at that stage commonly referred to as "mid-life." The term baffles me to some extent. For one thing, since no one knows how long he or she will live, "mid-life" can only be calculated in retrospect. Nevertheless, it's a time when people often ask themselves, "Now that I'm 'grown up,' what should I do with the rest of my life?" Others become so obsessed with trying to hang onto the years gone by that they make a mess out of the years yet to come. This is known as "mid-life crisis." But to my mind that's a term which is vastly overused. It's as if any mildly adventurous decision is attributed to this mythological trauma known as "mid-life."

Now I'm not talking about the guy who leaves his wife of 25 years for someone half his age, or the woman who becomes compulsive about her looks and gets hooked on plastic surgery and hair dye. I just happen to think that we tend to look at mid-life in negative terms when really there are a whole lot of positives to this time of life. Not every choice made by the 45-55-year-old individual is driven by the desire to stay forever young.

Some things are just plain fun, and for whatever reason we never got around to doing them before this — things like riding around on a motorbike or taking college courses for the sheer joy of learning. Other things are merely the privilege of middle age. You can trade in your mini-van for a compact car if you wish, or maybe you'll opt to keep the mini-van for the sake of comfort rather than necessity. Dinner out no longer requires a restaurant

challenging time? Following are some survival tips:

Survival tips

- Learn as much as possible about stroke, and educate family and friends to help them understand.
- Include your loved one in conversations, even if their ability to participate is limited. If communication is very difficult, ask the hospital speech-language pathologist for suggestions.
- Encourage participation in decision making.
- Attend some therapy sessions with your loved one. Find out what they are and aren't able to do, then avoid doing things for them that they're capable of doing themselves. On the other hand, don't push them to do things they're not capable of — this will only cause frustration and embarrassment.
- Focus on progress made,

however small the steps, and encourage your loved one to do the same.

- Continue to involve your loved one in family activities and community events. If they rely on a wheelchair to get around, have them registered with the accessible transportation service in your area (a physiotherapist or social worker can facilitate this).

- Take things one day at a time so as not to get overwhelmed.

- Find at least one person — friend, pastor, mental health professional — you can talk to openly, who will listen and empathize. Consider joining a support group for families of stroke survivors.

- Look after your physical and mental health; the latter includes staying connected to friends and outside activities. In order to do so, schedule a regular break from visiting at the hospital or caregiving at home.

Intangible
Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

with a drive-thru. You may need reading glasses to do it, but at last you can sit down and read the books you want to read without someone climbing onto your lap with their own selection.

Some jobs easier now

Some jobs are even easier at this stage in life than earlier on. When Jack and I did Youth Group together fifteen years ago we needed a babysitter every time we left the house. For weekend rallies we had to enlist the help of grandparents or friends willing to look after our kids while we hung out with other people's teenagers. By the time our stretch as youth leaders was over we owed favors to just about everybody we knew. These days, it's a different story. If I'm kept up way past my bedtime, no baby will summon me for feeding at 4:00 a.m. and no toddler will demand my company at sunrise.

Don't get me wrong. I have openly confessed to being resistant to change. If I could have arrested the development of my children at any particular stage in life they'd probably all still be in diapers. And I wouldn't mind looking a little more like I did on my wedding day. But since it's all out of my control I'll try to relax and enjoy whatever this stage of life has to offer. Someone once said that "old" is simply 20 years added to whatever age you're at. That's not such a bad thing, is it? Anyway, since I plan to live

until I'm at least 100, I've got another five years before I have to worry about "mid-life crisis."



Heidi VanDerSlikke lives in
Harriston, Ont.

- Ask other family members to help out as needed. If your loved one will be returning home or is already home with you, find out about relevant community support services and make use of them. Don't take on every responsibility single-handedly, or you'll burn yourself out.

- Be patient with your loved one and yourself. Allow plenty of time to adjust to the changes in your relationship and your lifestyle.

- Pray together for the strength to cope positively with challenges and the wisdom to make sound decisions.

- Look for ways to include laughter and joy in each day — this will enhance your relationship and help foster a positive outlook.

Lisa M. Petsche is a health care social worker and freelance writer based in Stoney Creek, Ont.

Church history

An anniversary revisited

Harry Boonstra

The anniversary referred to in the title is the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested readers can find many details in two books recently published: Herman Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake: A Doctrinal History of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, and a collection of articles, *Our Goody Heritage Preserved*.

The anniversary is of interest to several Reformed denominations. The United Reformed Church has recently had discussions with the Protestant Reformed Churches, the Canadian Reformed Churches have an interesting history with them, and the 2001 synod of the Christian Reformed Church instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee to "review our denomination's relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches with a view to establishing a renewed relationship of fellowship."

A thumbnail history

First, a thumbnail history. The Protestant Reformed Churches split from the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 when Rev. Herman Hoeksema was deposed (rather precipitously) from the CRC and he and his supporters formed the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Common grace was the doctrine at issue. A similar split occurred in the Netherlands during the Second World War with Klaas Schilder as the central figure. Some of the theological issues involved were quite similar. So in the 1950s the PRC tried to enlarge their flock by doing "missionary" work in Hamilton, Ontario, among recent Dutch immigrants from the "Liberated" churches, that is, the followers of Schilder. This effort failed, and one of the outcomes was a split in the PRC: Rev. Hubert De Wolff and other pastors led their congregations out of the PRC and most of them rejoined the CRC in 1961. The PRC currently counts 27 congregations (two are in Canada) and approximately 6,500 members.

Flaws in church ignored

In some ways the books mentioned above are rather old-fashioned denominational histories. The PRC is looked upon as the true church, with few or any flaws, and the firm assurance that all past and present opponents were always wrong. If one compares such writing to that of the latest history of the CRC by James Schaap (*Our Family Album*), one notes a dramatic difference. Schaap loves his denomination, but is also very aware of its shortcomings — both

past and present. Such honesty speaks well for the author.

But in the PRC histories any shortcomings of the denomination are not acknowledged. The PRC has a tendency to equate their particular theological interpretation with God's truth, and to consider those who differ with them the enemies of God. Coupled with this judgmental attitude is a harshness of expression which ill befits a Christian.

Judgmental harshness

Most of these 75 years, judgmental harshness has been directed at the CRC, at those who disagree with the theology of the PRC, and at those who have left the church. The CRC has largely ignored this maligning and perhaps that is the best response. My reason for calling attention to this aspect is to provide some defense of the CRC, as well as of those who have left the PRC. Such folks have been called schismatics, apostates, heretics; their motives have been maligned and their faith called into question. The PRC anniversary may be an appropriate time to challenge this portrayal, and to set realistic expectations for future discussions.

The judgmental language of Hoeksema started early. In 1914, when Hoeksema was a student at Calvin Seminary, a church in Holland, Michigan, complained about him. As a student-preacher Hoeksema said in the congregational prayer, "Lord, impress on the minds of the people here that when they send their children to the Public School, they send them to the portals of hell." Some years later, Hoeksema was a prominent voice in a major theological controversy in the CRC. Professor R. Janssen of Calvin Seminary was accused of un-Reformed interpretations of Scripture. Hoeksema, who was Janssen's pastor, was also one of his main accusers. At one point in the synodical discussions, Hoeksema exclaimed against Janssen, "Lord, do I not hate those who hate Thee; I hate them with a perfect hatred!"

When Hoeksema himself was deposed, he called those who differed from him not merely wrong, but he said, "They will soon be found out as battling against God. That they are doing, according to my holiest conviction." (*The Standard Bearer*, May 1925, p. 25). (*The Standard Bearer* became the principal voice for Hoeksema and the PRC. Most of my quotations will be from this magazine and will be indicated by date and page).

One of the pastors who had joined Hoeksema was Rev. Henry

Danhof, who was counted as a beloved friend and fellow warrior. However, by 1926 Danhof no longer agreed with Hoeksema, and they went separate ways.

Hoeksema found Danhof not just wrong or theologically mistaken. No, Hoeksema called him "recalcitrant, hostile, suspicious, driven by bitterness and an evil spirit, with a spirit of petty jealousy, envy partisanship and suspicion, with offensive language and behavior" (*The Protestant Reformed Churches*, pp. 269-287).

This judgmental harshness became the hallmark of the PRC whenever someone disagreed. In the early 1950s the artillery was aimed at the "Liberated" — the followers of Klaas Schilder in the Netherlands, who himself had been deposed by the Dutch Reformed Churches. A number of these people had immigrated to Canada and had briefly associated with the PRC. When disagreement came, the Liberated stated their critique of Hoeksema. Was this just theological disagreement? No, Hoeksema judged that in one document they had produced "a very evil piece of work, that certainly cannot have been conceived in the mind and heart of any regenerated child of God." It is a "crooked and wicked contrivance" (Oct. 1, 1951, p. 40).

'Cesspools of corruption'

In 1953 the PRC faced another controversy, and over half of the denomination left. Now the rhetoric was again turned up several degrees. Those who left have "apostatized" (Sept. 15, p. 436). The departure of these members might be lamentable, but also had its up side, because here was an opportunity "of cleaning out some cesspools of corruption in our churches" (May 1953, p. 343). Constantly referring to them as "schismatics" and "heretics," Hoeksema also brought Scripture to bear: comparing his opponents to the "man who has his father's wife," (1 Cor. 5) he judged that such people are "to be handed over to Satan" (Dec. 1, p. 129).

The antagonism was not limited to words. In the 1953 split, one Grand Rapids congregation excommunicated all those members who chose to go with the "De Wolff group." This excommunication was communicated by mail and included a young man who had been serving in the military when his parents decided to leave the PRC! Some families disowned their children (financially and emotionally) when the children left the PRC. (Fortunately when grandchildren made their

appearance this harshness usually softened).

One of the worst outbursts occurred when these dissidents were planning to rejoin the CRC. Hoeksema had been criticized for calling those who had left the PRC "schismatics." In a frenzy he defended that term and then he continued: "Must we call them 'Christians'? God forbid!... Just listen to what our Lord Jesus Christ calls them in Matthew 23." And then Hoeksema applied all the condemnations of Jesus against the Pharisees to his theological opponents: "Hypocrites, blind guides, whited sepulchres, full of iniquity, generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" (April 15, 1962, p. 316.) When these "schismatics" were welcomed back into the CRC, Hoeksema had another chance to label the CRC: "O, the damnable, corrupt politics in the Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Sept. 1, 1961, p. 461). Another minister applied another biblical text to the dissidents, accusing them of "returning to their own vomit."

Billy Graham called false teacher

This severity in the *Standard Bearer* has continued on many fronts, by various writers. For example, during the 1950s there was open season on Billy Graham in the SB. He was labeled a "false teacher," and "outside the true church." Again, Graham's work and its results are "an effective agency for realizing and strengthening the apostate church" (Oct. 1, 1955). Those supporting him were called Pharisees and Sadducees.

Later the CRC was accused of "ecclesiastical hypocrisy," in its condemning of South African apartheid. The editor applied Christ's saying of the beam and the mote. The mote is the practice of apartheid (it's a mere sliver!), while the beam of hypocrisy is the CRC's holding to the doctrine of common grace. (Sept. 1, 1984, p. 462).

Again, in 1989, when other Christians reached out to the victims of the San Francisco earthquake, sending food and medical supplies, the *Standard Bearer* judged, "The earthquake was the voice of an angry God, punishing sinners in revolt against Him and cursing the earth on man's account." They had it coming and it serves them right. What else could you expect God to do with all those homosexuals there! And the editor sneered at those Christians who did send emergency relief! (Nov. 1, 1989, pp. 53-54)

More recently, the *Standard*

Bearer has judged that the PRC will not be able to accept baptisms from the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America. Why? Because some children have been baptized by women ministers, and "baptism administered by women is not a means of grace." If such children were later to join the PRC, they would have to be re-baptized. For good measure the editor adds that the admission of women to the ministry "is direct divine judgment upon its decision of 1924 adopting the dogma of common grace" (March 1, 2000, p. 246).

Other churches ignore PRC

The PRC sometimes complain that other (especially Reformed) churches ignore them. Perhaps so. But the PRC ought to borrow a page from Dale Carnegie and learn that if you address the folks you want to converse with as "unregenerate," "heretics," "dogs" and "vipers," and class them with the biblical Pharisees — that such a posture does not exactly invite conversation.

When Professor John Bolt of Calvin Seminary recently wrote a summary of the church conflict of 1924, he bent over backwards to be fair to Herman Hoeksema and give him every benefit of the doubt. The *Standard Bearer's* reaction? The editor praised Bolt that he had seen the light, but then he compared the CRC to Joseph's wicked brothers. And, of course, the PRC is the godly Joseph who was favored by the Lord.

I suppose it's an improvement to be compared to Joseph's brothers, rather than being called a brood of vipers, but I fail to see much room for brotherly (and sisterly) conversation.

Another recent development occurred at the ecclesiastical level. Classis Grand Rapids East (the classis that had deposed Hoeksema) was asked to entertain an overture to the CRC synod in which the CRC would ask forgiveness of the PRC. Classis chose not to do so. The reaction of the editor of the *Standard Bearer*: "It was Classis East, Grand Rapids that deposed Herman Hoeksema from the CRC ministry in January 1925. By this act, it killed one of its prophets. Seventy-six years later to the month, delegates of the same classis made no bones about it, that they are children of them who killed the prophet" (April 15, 2001, p. 328). Again — not exactly an olive branch.

The current editor is worried that some day the *Standard Bearer*

Continued on page 17...

Cross Border Broodings/Church history

The long shadow of 'Ouwe Bram'

Ty Hofman

For young readers, and anyone not familiar with the Dutch tradition, I'm referring here to a great hero of the Reformed folk, Abraham Kuyper, who rose to power and prestige as a church reformer and as the Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the turn of the 20th century.

As he grew older, those who knew him more intimately spoke of him affectionately as *Ouwe Bram*. Stories about him abound, including one which advised visitors not to follow him too closely as he labored up the spiral stairway to his study. It might be dangerous and embarrassing. But he was likely the most significant Dutch reformer of all time, whose influence has been felt over much of the world. Today, a century after his active ministry, his long shadow still reaches out, and that in the most unlikely of places — in the prison systems of the world. Let me tell you about the connection.



A great hero of the Reformed folk, Abraham Kuyper, affectionately known as *Ouwe Bram*.

Birth of Prison Fellowship

About 25 years ago a criminal in a U.S. prison was coming to terms with his political shenanigans and with his Savior. When he was released he vowed he would spend his life serving the Lord and doing something to bring the kingdom of Christ to those he lived

with in the years he was paying for his crime. His name was Charles Colson, the infamous hatchet man in the Nixon White House. And the rest is history — the history of an organization called Prison Fellowship Ministries (PFM) which is presently celebrating a quarter century of ministry. PFM is bring-

ing a Christian witness into every prison of any significance in the 50 states and in so doing is reaching a potential 2,000,000 inmates.

The ministry of PFM touches the lives of prisoners of every kind, from the young and naive who have been caught up in the drug scene to the mean and hardened who have committed violent crimes carrying life sentences.

An anniversary revisited

... continued from page 16

might become just another "nice, friendly, religious rag" (*Goodly Heritage*, p. 129). I see no immediate danger.

My perspective on the PRC, on the CRC, and especially on those who have left the PRC is very different from the *Standard Bearer* views I have sketched above. A few brief comments:

1. I am currently researching the civil court case against Rev. Hoeksema about the ownership of the Eastern Ave. church building in 1925. In the testimony it becomes clear that Hoeksema flagrantly defied the CRC synod of 1924. After spelling out its interpretation of common grace in three points, the Acts of Synod read: "Synod admonishes [Hoeksema and Danhof] to hold themselves in their preaching and writing to the position of our confession in reference to the three points under discussion." Hoeksema refused to do so, and precipitated the discipline against him.

2. When I read the SB's description of the CRC I do not

recognize my church. I am grateful to be in a denomination that is faithful to the Word and earnestly involved in both bringing the Good News and handing out the cup of cold water (also to earthquake victims). Yes, I also agree with Jim Schaap about the CRC's failings and failures.

Sense of freedom and joy

3. I personally know several hundred people who have left the PRC, most of them now in other Reformed churches. Nearly without exception these members express a sense of freedom and joy in the Lord. They left partly because they no longer agreed with the theology of the PRC. But they especially testify to a joy that they have left behind a tradition of an oppressive and grim church life. It has been wonderful to see these former PRC people blossom in their new churches and provide leadership in many capacities. To have these fellow Christians labeled as apostate and heretical for 75 years is a grave offense.

If the Lord tarries, I hope and

pray that the centennial of the PRC will include the following: A commemorative book that will give a record of healthy congregations, growing in grace and flourishing with new members added by evangelism. Also a history of their church without rancor, even with acknowledgement of denominational mistakes and errors. And I hope for a *Standard Bearer* that will continue to speak the truth — speaking it in love and with graciousness. Not as the Dr. Laura scold of the church world, but a church magazine that will portray other churches as part of the family of God and will urge readers to join other churches in supplying emergency food for earthquake victims. A magazine that will not see the CRC as the enemy, but as fellow servants in God's kingdom. In other words — a nice *Standard Bearer*.

Miracles do happen.

Harry Boonstra is Theological Librarian emeritus with Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

that in the average prison population. Sadly, most prisoners soon return to prison after having been released. Those who have been caught up into the PF program are much less likely to return to a life of crime than those who were not part of it. It is clearly the best thing that can be said for the U.S. prison system. That success has led PF to reach beyond the borders of the U.S. to a world in desperate need and eager for a solution to the terrible problems of crime and punishment. Today, Prison Fellowship has a ministry in 88 nations! Just think of it — in 25 years, a world wide ministry.

Pure Kuyperianism

The latest development in the PFM is the InterChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) in which a designated prison is administered at public expense but under Christian directives, with PFM providing a full-blown Christian world and life view program for those inmates voluntarily choosing to become part of it. And it is in the whole PFM ministry, but especially in the IFI, that Abraham Kuyper comes in. For Colson has become an avid disciple of Kuyper through his contacts with some leading Reformed graduates and former teachers at Calvin College. In a 25th Year celebration pamphlet, the following catches it all. It's pure Kuyperianism!

"Christians' influence in transforming any aspect of culture derives from having an accurate biblical world-view — being able to examine and relate to all of life from a unified Christian framework."

Chuck Colson, with the insight and wisdom gained from men like Evan Runner, Nick Woltersdorff, Richard Mouw, George Marsden and Alvin Plantinga, is making a Kuyperian view of the gospel and the world a powerful source of life and hope for formerly hopeless inmates, with their lives in shambles. This thoroughly secular man, in just a few short years, has become the leading promoter of a Reformed world-and-life view and is applying it in his own life and in the prisons of the world. Indeed, the shadow of *Ouwe Bram* is bringing light and life on a scale totally beyond imagination. Just think — in 88 nations!

The first prison in which this IFI program was introduced was in Texas with the encouragement and backing of then Governor George W. Bush. (Praise God for this brave man!) Kansas and Iowa have followed suit. Several other states, including Georgia, are working on it as well. It is the one ray of hope

for the redemption of prisoners and prisons, world-wide.

Crossroad Bible Institute

One more reality should be factored in at this point. Some years ago a CRC volunteer prison worker, Tom De Vries, started a correspondence Bible course for prisoners which has experienced almost as dramatic development as PFM. When the work got beyond his ability to carry it on, he formed a parachurch ministry called Crossroad Bible Institute (CBI) which, largely through volunteers, sends correspondence Bible study material to prisoners. They complete the lessons and return them to the office, which sends them to CBI instructors for evaluation. After marking the lessons, the instructors return them to the inmate along with an encouraging personal letter and sends a report, usually by e-mail, to the office. In the meantime the inmate has received another lesson. The instructors get a lesson each week, always from a different prisoner. The lessons are sent in packets to the participating churches and are distributed on Sunday morning.

At this point, CBI has 2,227 instructors working with 9,000 to 10,000 inmates. In a recent month CBI received about 4,000 application requests from prisoners in Georgia as a result of PFM's Operation Starting Line ministry in its prisons. This in addition to 4,000 from Arizona a couple of months earlier and 2,800 from Wisconsin. Not all of these will actually enroll but many will.

The CBI office is staffed with some paid personnel but the bulk of the work is done by a host of volunteers from area churches.

This ministry is amazingly effective in the lives of those who have enrolled and is enthusiastically carried out in the churches. For example, Neland Ave. CRC in Grand Rapids presently has 42 instructors who consider themselves blessed in being involved in a ministry that is effectively reaching people who are in need. We're working along with the old saint, Abraham Kuyper, in bringing reformation into the lives of people in crisis and helping to bring some solution to one of the world's most painful problems. We are seeing his shadow all over the place.



Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

News Comment

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

WHO IS GOING TO BE the next pope? An important question for the Christian World. John Paul II is now 81 and frail. It seems that, in his old age, the Polish Pope is falling back on his very conventional roots, nurtured in decades of isolation during the Soviet years. I remember how, about 15 years ago, in our village, a young Polish priest refused to be part of the ministerial and, in his broken English, persecuted parents whose kids attended Vacation Bible School. John Paul II has this same unprogressive streak and has selected cardinals, who will soon choose his successor, from among the most conservative priests.

During his 23 years John Paul has appointed almost all the current members of which there now are a great array of colors and countries. In 1903, only two of the 62 cardinals were non-European, Italy alone had 37. Now there are 65 from Europe, 16 from North America, 24 from South America, 13 each from Africa and Asia and four from Australasia.

His orthodox outlook became evident again when a few months ago word came out of Rome that: "The redemption and salvation of sinners is possible only through the Roman Catholic Church. Other Christian communities (such as Anglicans, United, Presbyterians, Christian Reformed, Pentecostal) are not churches in the proper sense," so said Congregational secretary Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone at a press conference; "the doctrine on which the declaration

is based is 'infallible' and therefore immune from liability to error."

ABOUT 40 YEARS AGO, there was a different spirit in the Mother Church. A wave of renewal blew through all elements of the Roman church: Vatican II breathed new life in its body of world wide believers. In Roman Catholic churches everywhere local congregations did away with communion rails and the priests were told to interpret the Gospel as a call to social action. A new breed of clerics fought for integration and school decentralization, built housing for the poor, spoke out on issues such as nuclear disarmament and the Vietnam War. Vatican II, the brainchild of Pope John XXIII, gave lay people a role in running parishes, replaced Latin used at Mass with local languages and gave the clergy a voice in church matters. This almost revolutionary three-year long church assembly identified social justice as an integral part of the church's mission and reversed the church's age-old insistence that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. The church then said that Catholicism did not represent the only path to salvation, a radical statement.

THE CURRENT POPE HAS reversed this process. Why this retrenching? I think part of the answer lies in the absence of maturity on the part of both priests and laity. The people in the pew and the

priests in front of them, have grown old, but their insight and knowledge and religious fervor have not expanded, basically because the church doesn't trust her members — as it did in Vatican II during the 1960s. So the advice of the old cardinals to an even older pope is: stick to the tried and proven: play it safe.

But playing it safe is the opposite of renewal and typical of old people who will soon pass on. So who is going to be the new pope?

The College of Cardinals was restructured earlier this year and 44 new members were named. The Sacred College now has 185 members, of whom 135 are eligible to vote — those over 80 are not — and given that Vatican law limits the number of papal electors to 120, the current pope is counting on at least 15 more to have reached the upper limit of four-score years before he is replaced.

Believe it or not, these cardinals are human. Just as there are contenders busy getting support to replace Chretien, so too among the 120 hopefuls are some quietly campaigning for the job of Holy Father.

Who will be the next pope? Many church people would like to see a true prophet, such as John XXIII. They'd like to see a pope who would be flexible, respecting the natural human inclination to probe, even if this leads to challenging accepted truths, such as allowing the clergy to marry and having women ordained. They'd like to see a pastoral pope, who offers new visions through charismatic appeals to the wider Christian community. They'd want a pontiff who would encourage all Christians to transmit the good news to all cultures, secure in the knowledge that truth also exist beyond the "Christian" world.

Let's hope that the next conclave will find such a man with all these female qualities and perhaps in a few more decades we will see a woman pope, because women are asserting themselves everywhere, even on the battlefield.

A SINGLE PARAGRAPH IN a newspaper grabbed my attention last week: "A group of Tamil Tiger women attacked a police camp in Sri Lanka yesterday, killing 16 police officers and two civilians and wounding 18 others. Seven rebels also were killed and nine injured."

Throughout history war has stood out as the most important male preserve by far. Watching

soldiers disembark from a plane in Skopje, Macedonia, there to collect weapons from the Albanian freedom fighters, all I saw were lanky male figures: not a single female among them.

The connection between 'man' and 'warrior' is so close that in many languages the two terms are interchangeable. The Greek word for 'courage' is 'andreia', which is derived from 'aner', man, implying that females have no courage and are by nature weak and 'unmanly.' The ultimate insult we can give to a man is to call him a woman.

But here, in Sri Lanka, a totally female company of soldiers, overran a presumably well protected army base, 'manned' with mostly male officers I imagine, leaving many more dead and wounded than the attackers: thus a very successful military operation.

NOWADAYS ARMED FORCES everywhere are trying to enlist women. Martin van Crefeld, who teaches history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, wrote a still timely book about 10 years ago, called *The Transformation of War*. In it he makes some interesting points regarding women and war. Says he: "Had men been made to fight side by side with women, or else to confront them as enemies, then for them armed conflict would have lost its meaning and might well have come to an end.... Suppose some feminist-inspired legislation would oblige all professional football teams to be sexually integrated: this would put male players into a position where they are damned if they hit the women hard, and damned if they don't. Rather than suffer the field to be littered with female bodies — or even worse being beaten by a female team — most men would probably cease playing."

THERE ARE STORIES where women disguised themselves as men, campaigned for months and years, proved themselves as brave as any male, yet discovery always led to dismissal. Of course they had to alter their body shape somewhat, so no wonder the word Amazon literally means 'without breasts.'

Let's face it, the army doesn't want women. Armies are social organizations and their ability to function depends on their cohesion. The best units are those which, even as they were staring death in the face, have erased the

distinction between 'him' and 'me' in favor of the 'us'. Says Dr van Crefeld: "women's presence in the military can be tolerated only to the extent that they are dewomanized. Either they are turned into public property, that is prostitutes, or else they must be treated like substitute men. This is the choice many of them find degrading, and no wonder."

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE is to have all-female military sections, just as in soccer, in hockey, in tennis and golf. That women attacked this police camp in eastern Sri Lanka, is perhaps an indication of the type of army we can expect in the future. Today everything is up for grabs, even the way we wage war, witness what these women did.

Martin van Crefeld predicts that the next century will not see the large military wars which defined the Twentieth Century. Instead he envisions low-intensity conflicts, which, like cancer will affect the entire human race, including us in the West. Says he: "Who can point to a society so isolated, so homogeneous, so rich, and so wallowing in its contentment as to be in principle immune?" Based on that, he predicts that the most powerful of today's advanced weapons will disappear. I see the planned U.S. National Missile Defense (NMD) system as a celestial Maginot Line, which France constructed in the Thirties to keep Germany out. The German army neatly blitzed around it. In Bush's NMD the sky is the limit, also financially, with a success rate even less than France's pre-WWII fortifications, now synonymous with passive defense and defeatism. Instead of weapons and devices to combat popular uprisings, revolts; guerilla wars, will become the norm. In essence the military will become an extension of the police. The signs are everywhere: in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, in Chechnya, Turkey, Kashmir, in the Gaza Strip and the Spanish Basque region. Also the gender integrated protests in connection with G8 and World Trade Organization meetings are part of this. The refusal of the IRA to surrender their weapons fits in here. Will Macedonia prove to be an exception? Don't count on it.

As always: we live in interesting times.

Bert Hielema observes the world from Tweed, Ont.

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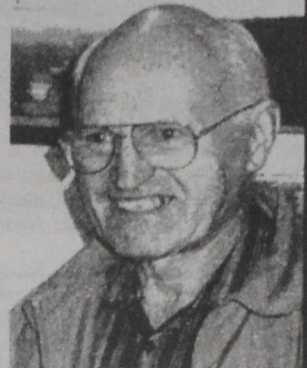
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News

Chinese mission on North American campuses

Michael Ireland

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota — Glenn Kenadjian was working with international students at the University of Minnesota in the early 1990s when he soon found that around 75 per cent of the internationals who were coming to activities and who wanted to meet to study the Bible and learn more about Christianity were from China.

Figuring that he might be more effective focusing on this one group, he started in 1994 a branch of China Outreach Ministries at the University of Minnesota. Since then, it has grown to five campus workers and many volunteers from many different churches around the Twin Cities Metro area.

China Outreach Ministries (COM) began as Chinese Overseas Christian Mission in London, England, in the 1950s. Former missionaries to China began working with the many Chinese there who were now unable to return to China. In time, it switched its focus to sponsoring Christian radio broadcasts beamed into China. However, after the doors opened up in the 1980s, COM saw the great potential for ministry amongst Chinese students at U.S. universities. COM began to recruit campus staff. The result today is nearly 40 staff ministering on 28 campuses around the U.S. and Canada.

In an interview with ASSIST Communications, Kenadjian was asked why it was so important to reach Chinese students studying in the United States?

No more strategic ministry

"David Aikman, a China specialist and former senior correspondent for *TIME* Magazine has said that there is no more strategic ministry than that of ministry to Chinese intellectuals studying here in the U.S.," said Kenadjian.

"China is a rising power, economically and militarily. China is a major player on the world scene and desperately needs the touch of the gospel. Christianity is growing rapidly in China among the working class. But the intellectuals are closely watched in China, and any ministry on Chinese college campuses has to be done very quietly and discretely," he said.

"Here in the U.S., however," said Kenadjian, "it is possible not only to openly reach these students with the gospel, but also to disciple and train them as people of influence for China. It is our hope that of those that we see come to Christ many will return to China and give their lives to influence China at many levels of society."

Kenadjian seeks to reach the Chinese community at the university through a variety of means. "We hold Chinese-American outreach dinners each month

consisting of a potluck dinner, singing and a speaker. When Dan Wooding (founder and president of ASSIST Ministries) spoke at our dinner last Saturday, 150 people attended — our largest one yet."

Wooding challenged the audience of post-graduate and doctoral students to answer two questions. He asked if they thought their coming to America was by accident or design, and whether they believed in a Creator God. A lively discussion on these two questions ensued at each of the dining tables.

"We also help Chinese with meeting practical needs. We arrange Bible studies and a discipleship group. We sponsor trips and recruit Chinese to go to regional Christian conferences. We arrange for Americans to host Chinese. And of course we enjoy individual times talking with Chinese students and scholars," said Kenadjian.

Chinese evangelistic meetings

At least once a year COM at the University of Minnesota co-sponsors, with other Christian groups and Chinese churches, a Chinese speaker to hold evangelistic meetings. Two nights in July, Yuan Zhiming spoke each night on campus to 400 to 500 Chinese. He spoke to hundreds more at Chinese churches the following Sunday.

Perhaps 50 to 100 decisions for Christ were made over the course of his stay," Kenadjian said.

"We also make it a point to help newcomers from China. This fall we arranged airport pickups and temporary housing at the homes of local Christians for over 30 new arrivals. We help them and many other new arrivals with other practical helps such as getting them a cheap bicycle and helping them find and move used furniture. We find this really opens up their hearts to want to know more about God and the Bible."

The students Kenadjian works with come from all over China. He said some come from rural areas where they are the only person for miles around with an education beyond high school, while others come from the big cities. The University of Minnesota has one of the largest population of students and scholars from China anywhere in the world outside of China — perhaps as many as 2,000 mainland Chinese, including family members.

Most Chinese are in the engineering, science or medical related fields. "Very few come here as undergraduates. Most are graduate students working on PhD degrees. Some are visiting faculty members from Chinese universities doing research here for one to three years."

"A number of the graduate

students take jobs in the U.S. for a number of years after graduation. Even these make a big difference in China, through their short-term trips home and witness to family members and friends. Visiting scholars, however, all return to make a difference in top academic positions," said Kenadjian, adding: "We do not directly work in China with people once they return, but we work to connect them with Christians who are already there."

Amazing responsiveness

Kenadjian continued: "What is so amazing this year is how responsive some of these newcomers are right away. Virtually all of the Chinese who come here were raised in an atmosphere of atheism. However, one girl looked at her temporary housing host's personal web page while she was in China. She e-mailed him that she was very glad that he was an active Christian because she had been looking for God for years! It turns out she had a Christian English teacher in China who had raised her interest."

Kenadjian tells the story of one Chinese student who called him to see if he had a Bible study going on that he could attend. "I told him I would start a new one. I invited Chinese who had expressed spiritual interest, and now we have a new introductory Bible study with eight Chinese. We expect to start at least one more Bible study soon with mainly newcomers," he said.

The most touching story for Kenadjian has to do with the newcomer from China his own family hosted. "I immediately enjoyed him and saw he was a very strong thinker, not only about his research area but about the meaning of life, too."

"He had some Christian friends, and he had been reading the Bible on his own. We had some good talks and he joined the new Bible study at my house," said Kenadjian. "The next week I took him shopping and we came back to my house to talk. He said he was seriously thinking about becoming a Christian. I asked if he knew how to become a Christian, and he said 'No.' I shared the good news with him and he received Christ as his Savior and Lord! I'm looking forward to further developing our friendship and seeing him grow in Christ."

Overall, Kenadjian said, most come here at least curious to learn more about the Christian faith, and many are genuinely seeking — especially those who have had positive contacts with Christians.

Churches urged to promote a new model of development

Cedric Pulford

LONDON, England (ENI) — Churches are being urged to promote an alternative model of development based on the transformation of personal relationships rather than concentrating narrowly on the aim of economic growth. Such a model would include removing exploitative economic and gender relationships within a country, and honoring children and older people, as goals to stand alongside debt and trade issues.

The call is being made by Mark Oxbrow, a council member of the UK-based evangelical group Global Connections, in a contribution to *Development Matters*, a new book published by the Church of England. Oxbrow, who is the international mission director of the Church Mission Society, an Anglican agency, argues that the causes of poverty are relational, and that effort is wasted by addressing only the symptom and not the cause.

He told ENI: "I am not denying the importance of economic

development, but societal transformation and personal spiritual transformation are often wrongly treated as separate agendas."

Effective advocacy work

As examples of this new approach, Oxbrow points to the worldwide church-inspired Jubilee 2000 campaign for the cancellation of the unpayable debt of the world's poorest countries and the fair trade campaign encouraging Western consumers to buy goods for which the producers have received a fair return. The Jubilee 2000 campaign, he writes, is "an example of the growing significance of effective advocacy work in a world in which rapid communication and globalization force us to reinterpret the meaning of the word 'neighbor.'"

About fair trade, he writes: "Through the work of Christian Aid, small boys in India, who would never themselves have found a voice with which to speak in those European homes adorned with the carpets they have woven,

are seen and heard."

Another contributor to *Development Matters*, Claire Melamed, a senior policy officer with Christian Aid, argues that the WorldTrade Organization has worsened the situation when free trade is pursued at the expense of people in developing countries whom it is supposed to help. "No government in history has ever managed to reduce poverty significantly through liberalization alone," Melamed writes. The most dramatic reductions in poverty in the 20th century, in East Asia and China, "all came about through careful management of trade and investment, designed to build up competitive local industries".

Melamed told ENI she regretted that the development debate was often characterised as liberalization versus protectionism. "It's not one or the other," she said. "Free trade, for example, benefits consumers although it may harm producers," she said. However, "the experience of closed economies is not a good

one."

She urged a mixed approach related to the situation in each country but, in a downbeat assessment of the current aid scene, she saw no evidence of such an approach even from the World Bank despite its announced softer line on aid projects. Melamed called for more emphasis on redressing inequality: "Even when poverty reduction is happening — in Latin America, for example — it's not happening as fast as it might with more emphasis on equality."

Thirteen other specialists contributed to *Development Matters*, on subjects including the role of business in development, good governance and corruption, globalization and scripture, exclusion in an urbanizing world, and an interfaith response to poverty and development.

Development Matters: Christian Perspectives on Globalization, edited by Charles Reed, was published by Church House Publishing.

Classifieds

Classified Rates	Anniversaries	Help Wanted	Miscellaneous
<p>As of May 1999: Note: 7% GST will be added to all prices listed below.</p> <p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, nine business days prior to publication.</p> <p>RATES All personal and family announcements: \$16.00 per column inch (pci) + GST (columns are two inches wide). Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: minimum \$18.20 pci + GST, depending on design and frequency.</p> <p>PHOTOS There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.</p> <p>PERSONAL ADS <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. 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And editing style. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>Thank You We want to thank everyone who congratulated us when we were 50 years married. We enjoyed the cards, flowers, well-wishes, telephone calls and visits very much. Jan and Jane de Koning Willowdale, Ont.</p> <p>Wanted to Rent Looking for cottage to rent with 3 or 4 couples from December to March in northern Ontario, near snowmobiling areas. Call 905-892-3972 or fax 905-892-3790.</p> <p>Church News Christian Reformed Church Classis B.C. North-West will meet D.V. October 16 and 17 in the First CRC of New Westminster, starting at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday. Peter Brouwer Stated Clerk.</p>	 <p><i>Congratulations to John & Grace De Jong on their 40th wedding anniversary.</i></p> <p>1961 September 16 2001 With rejoicing and thankfulness to God, we are pleased to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents JOHN and GRACE DE JONG (nee BOEYENGA) Congratulations, Mom and Dad, on 40 years of loving each other and our family. May the Lord give you many more years of good health and joy together. Deb & Mike Hampson — Courtice, Ont. Hailey, Melanie Teresa & Willy Katerberg — Guelph, Ont. Devin, Rhianne, Carlin Sam & Brad Kelly — Caledonia, Ont. Jassin Trish De Jong — Hamilton, Ont. Best wishes can be sent to: 36 Callander Dr., Guelph, ON N1E 4H5</p> <p>Personal Widow lady mid-60s, like to meet a Christian gentleman non smoker. Please send letters to File #2721, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p>Christian fellow, 53, divorced, who enjoys friends, games, reading, skiing, swimming, walking, hiking, canoeing, travel and photography. Has training in nursing and technology, twice served as elder and sincerely loves Jesus as personal Saviour. Would love to meet an honest, sincere, caring Christian lady. Please send letters to File #2723 c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p>Caring, attractive Christian widow, late 40s, enjoys family time, friends and personal career, wishing to meet or correspond with Christian male of similar age, qualities and interests, in the Calgary area. Send letters to File #2722, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p>Obituary "I depend on God alone; I put my hope in him." (Psalm 62:5) On August 23, 2001, in Abbotsford, B.C. DINA HERMINA SCHAAFSMA (SWEN) entered into the presence of her Lord and Saviour. Predeceased by her husband, Arend W. Schaafsma, in 1980. A tender, loving mother to: Pete & Joan Schaafsma — Brampton, Ont. Joe & Janette Schaafsma — Victoria, B.C. Andrew & Ena Schaafsma — Waterdown, Ont. Christina & Jeff Wubs — Surrey, BC Ada & Mike Tigchelaar — Campbellville, Ont. Diane & Bert Slofstra — Abbotsford, B.C. Art & Sue Schaafsma — Ridgetown, Ont. A wonderful Oma to 26 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. Correspondence address: Christina Wubs, 9248-163 St., Surrey, BC V4N 3C9</p> <p>Job Opportunity We are seeking a pastor to join us in the Essex Christian Reformed Church of Essex, Ont. We are a church of 68 families, prayerfully seeking a pastor to lead us in our ministry. Our church profile is available through our search committee. Please contact: Henry Mulder, chairperson 519-776-5161 or Tina Schinkel, secretary 519-776-7200; fax 519-776-5038</p> <p>Send your anniversary, birthday and other important family notices to: Christian Courier at fax #: 905-682-8313, or by e-mail to: ccadpromo@aol.com</p>  <p>Miscellaneous GRONINGERS Did you know there is a web-site for you? Check out: dideldom.com</p>	<p>Kraitt Greenhouses Ltd., a family run greenhouse operation near Millgrove, Ontario, is looking for full and/or part-time help, beginning September, 2001. Dental/prescription plan available. Please call 905-659-7638; fax 905-659-7909; e-mail: pjkratt@skyline.net or write to: Kraitt Greenhouses Ltd., 939-943 Concession 6 West, RR 1 Millgrove, ON L0R 1V0 for more details.</p> <p>MEADOW VALLEY HOUSE Seniors Residence, Dundas, Ont. - 24 hr. assisted daily living care - meals, laundry service provided - English & Dutch spoken For more info, call 905-627-1108</p> <p>Experience Banking the DUCA Way...</p>  <p>Great Interest Rates DUCA is committed to providing the best interest rates possible. Combine them with Bonus Shares, and no other Financial Institution can even come close.</p> <p>Bonus Shares How much has your bank paid you lately? Since 1999, DUCA has given some members more than \$6,000 in Bonus Shares. It's time you earned your Bonus Shares just by doing business with DUCA!</p> <p>Main Branch & Head Office 5290 Yonge Street Toronto, Ont. M2N 5P9 Tel. (416) 223-8502 Fax (416) 223-2575 E-mail: duca.info@duca.com Website: www.duca.com</p> <p>DUCA Financial Services</p> <p>Willowdale - Toronto - Rexdale - Etobicoke Scarborough - Brampton - Orangeville - Richmond Hill Newmarket - Oshawa - Bowmanville - Burlington</p> <p>DUCA Financial Services Credit Union Ltd.</p> <p>visit us at www.duca.com</p> <p>Event</p> <p>CELEBRATE</p> <p>You are invited to join staff, dignitaries, parents, children and friends of CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, HAMILTON, for the dedication of the new building. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2001 at 10:30 a.m. We thank God for his faithfulness through the generations. Please join the celebration.</p> <p>Calvin Christian School 547 West 5th Street, Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7</p> <p>For more information, please call Geraldine DeBoer at CCS (905-388-2645)</p>	

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Job Opportunities

The Board of Directors (BOD) of the Ontario Christian School Teachers' Association (OCSTA) invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The current Executive Director is retiring, D.V. as of July 31, 2002.

The Executive Director reports directly to the BOD but is expected to be the catalyst and prime mover for seven standing committees, associated agencies, related organizations, the OCSTA office and the seven hundred OCSTA members.

The BOD has determined that the OCSTA office will continue to be located in Ancaster, Ontario. The BOD has also determined that expectations of the current Executive Director exceed full-time and that some assistance is warranted for the position.

The BOD is interested in hearing from persons who have a proven reforming perspective of Christian education; who have a range of teaching/administrative training and experience in Christian schooling; who are articulate, motivated, visionary and self-starters.

You are cordially invited to discuss details with our current Executive Director, Hank Hultink, at 905-648-1200 or e-mail: ocsta@netcom.ca

Interested applicants should direct their data (C.V., including completed references from three sources) to:

OCSTA Executive Director Search Committee
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4

Applications for the position will be received until December 31, 2001. It is anticipated that the position will be awarded, D.V. by about mid February 2002.

Due to the anticipated retirement of its current Director, the *Christian Labour Association of Canada*, a trade union committed to justice in the workplace, is inviting persons with leadership skills to apply for the position of

- Executive Director -

The successful team leader will serve from the Union's Toronto office, and offer visionary leadership to a current team of 90 colleagues working out of six regional offices in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Applicants must be able to articulate their Christian faith and world view and have experience in the promotion of Christian social action, preferably in labour relations. The person appointed must have organizational leadership experience, be a good communicator, with the ability to promote the mission and growth of the organization.

Please apply in writing before October 31, 2001 to:
Neil J. Roos, Chair, Leadership Search Committee
#100, 15483 104 Ave.
Surrey, BC V3R 1N9
E-Mail: surrey@clac.ca Fax: 604-583-6166
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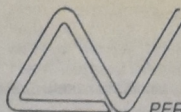
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Events/Advertising

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Sept. 15-16 Retirement and Farewell Rev. A. Van Geest, Blyth CRC, Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday Service 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 15-16 Angel art original work by Terri Heart 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. 43 Woodrush Ave., Welland, Ont. 905-734-4308
www.vaxxine.com/AngelicInspirations
- Sept. 22 Benefit concert organ/piano Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont. Ian Sadler and André Knevel 8 p.m.
- Sept. 22-23 Exeter Chr. Reformed Church, Exeter, Ont. 50th anniversary. For info. call 519-235-2990
- Sept. 22-23 Hope CRC, Brantford, Ont. 50th anniversary celebration. For info. call 519-759-7581 or 519-753-5543
- Sept. 27 Festive Christian Concert, Ont. Chr. Music Assembly, St. George's Cathedral, Kingston, Ont. 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 28 Liberation Choir Concert, Owen Sound, Ont. 8 p.m. Division St. United Church, 977 4th Ave. E.
- Sept. 28 Concert Ont. Chr. Music Assembly, Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel; First Presb. Church Brockville 7:30pm
- Sept. 29 Liberation Choir, Bowmanville, Ont. 8 p.m. Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, 2805 Hwy 2 E.
- Sept. 29 Festive Chr. Concert, Ont. Chr. Music Assembly, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, Ont. 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 29-30 Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ont. 25th anniversary celebration. Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sunday 10 a.m.
- Oct. 6 Mountainview Concerts, Man of Praise, Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont.
- Oct. 13 Netherlands Bazaar, Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave., Thornhill, Ont. Market Place: crafts, etc. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Auction 7-10 p.m., Dutch Food delicacies 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. For info. call 905-878-1040
- Oct. 13 Chapel Singers, Mountainview CRC concerts, Grimsby, Ont.
- Oct. 20 Liberation Choir, Hamilton, Ont. 8 p.m., Christ's Church Cathedral, 252 James St. N.
- Oct. 20 A Day of Encouragement. Training for deacons, elders, caregivers and outreach ministry planners at Hamilton District Chr. High School, Ancaster, Ont. Theme Open Doors, featuring 50 workshops. See ad.
- Oct. 26 Repeat Performance on Vision TV, celebration at Hamilton Place of 25th Anniversary Canadian Christian Education Foundation; 1000 voice student choir etc., 9 p.m. ET; 6 p.m. PT.
- Oct. 26 Mountainview concerts, Organ André Knevel, Sandor Van Marion, Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont.
- Nov. 2 Christian Festival Concert, direction Leendert Kooij, Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto. Call 416-636-9779
- Nov. 6 2001 Annual Church & Law Seminar, Bramalea Baptist Church, Bramalea located in Greater Toronto. Theme: "Ten Hot Topics for Churches and Religious Charities". Registration forms at www.charitylaw.ca and the host, Carter & Associates, 519-942-0001, fax: 519-942-0300; e-mail: seminars@charitylaw.ca
- Nov. 9 Concert Clinton CRC, 7:30 p.m. Laurens Kaldewy, organ; Blyth Fest. Orchestra; Ron Greidanus, piano; Men of Note. Call 519-482-5372
- Nov. 23 Liberation Choir, Orangeville, Ont. 8 p.m., Orangeville Can. Ref. Church, 55 C-Line.
- Nov. 24 Liberation Choir, London, Ont. 8 p.m., St. Paul's Cathedral, 472 Richmond St.
- Information for all Liberation Choir concerts: 905-457-2348
- Dec. 8 Mountainview concert, Grimsby. André Knevel, organ, flute, Stephanie Scholman, violin, Hosanna Choir.
- Dec. 15 Can. Chr. Education Foundation next VISION TV broadcasting. See Oct. 26 date of this calendar.

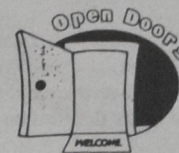


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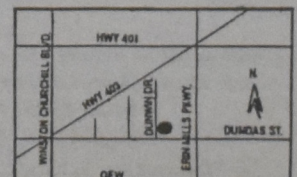
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News

Former CPJ staff becomes ambassador

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Alumni of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) are enjoying the limelight these days. Gerald Vandezande has just received the Order of Canada, and Ahmed Hashi, who was CPJ's refugee co-ordinator until last May, has become an ambassador.

In May, Hashi made his first return to his native Somalia since leaving more than 10 years previously, reports CPJ's communications co-ordinator Louise Slobodian. Before too long, a call came in from Mogadishu — Somalia's capital. Hashi had agreed to become the Somali ambassador to the United Nations in New York — one of only two diplomatic posts the Somali transitional government was establishing. Soon afterward, he was at the Organization of African Unity meetings in Lusaka, Zambia, helping to broker peace in border conflicts with Eritrea.



COURTESY CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE

Ahmed Hashi, refugee co-ordinator turned ambassador.

Because he's Canadian

And in one of those wonderful twists, the Somali people who have settled in Canada look approvingly at that diplomatic, peace-oriented action and say, "that's because he's Canadian," notes Slobodian.

Hashi started working with CPJ

in September 1999. He headed the Getting Landed Project, whose goal is to remove the barriers in policy and law which keep convention refugees in legal limbo and consequently from being landed in Canada. He worked to lessen the challenges and delays that refugees and immigrants face in obtaining immigrant status, which

cause hardship and frustration in their lives, according to CPJ's website.

Since arriving in Canada in 1992, Hashi has been involved in public education and advocacy work within Ottawa's refugee and immigrant community. He has been instrumental in helping newcomers to Canada adjust to a new

culture and a new land by setting up education and literacy programs. Hashi has gained considerable respect for his ability to bring together disparate communities to build networks and coalitions that support each other, reports CPJ.

Former prisoner of conscience

Hashi holds an L.L.M. (Law) from Moscow Lumumba University. He has worked as a civil servant in Somalia as permanent secretary for the Ministries of Culture, Higher Education, Justice, and Religious Affairs. He also served as the Ambassador to East Germany. Ahmed was a prisoner of conscience (in solitary confinement) on two occasions in 1975 and from 1981-85. During his second incarceration, he was adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

While working for CPJ, Hashi divided his time between Toronto and Ottawa, where he lived with his wife and family. Since May, Hashi has been in Somalia, and in January he will move to New York City with his family, says CPJ executive director Harry Kits.

CPJ has hired a new refugee co-ordinator on a short-term basis. She is Hamdi Mohamed, and is a refugee from Somalia, says Kits.

Week of fasting to focus on child poverty

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Because many Canadian children go hungry due to poverty, several faith-related agencies are presenting "End Child Poverty Fast!" — a week of prayer, fasting, and a call to political conscience to take place September 27 to October 4.

Citizens for Public Justice, the Canadian Council of Churches, Campaign Against Child Poverty, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and the Canadian Council for Reform Judaism are organizing End Child Poverty Fast. In a press release, these agencies explain, "Statistics Canada data indicates that one in every five Canadian children still lives below the poverty line.... Canada has fallen to third place on the UN Human Development Index primarily because of our collective failure to address poverty in Canada. Many within the faith community believe this is morally unacceptable and economically indefensible in a country as wealthy as Canada.

"We are inviting people of faith from across the country to join in a week of prayer, fasting and a call

to governments for a change of heart. This time period begins with Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, and leads up to World Food Day and Thanksgiving. The 'fasters' will be recognizing that many mothers are forced to go hungry at the end of the month so that their children can eat. Too many families in our communities lack safe, affordable housing."

Not enough done by government

"Some levels of governments have made some very modest steps under the National Children's Agenda. But they are not enough," the agencies contend. "Many in our communities have participated in previous actions and signed petitions and have written politicians. Those efforts have been important and have helped. What is required of Canada is a change of heart and what is required of our political leaders is a call to political conscience to do more... much more!

"Through prayer and fasting we hope to remember that too many Canadian children go to school

hungry due to poverty, that too many children are left alone or in unacceptable situations due to lack of affordable child care, that too many families in our communities lack safe, affordable housing.... We hope to rekindle our commitment to work for justice and serve our neighbors in need.... We hope for a greater solidarity among all Canadians that will encourage a bolder response and a stronger commitment from those in elected office. Our leaders make choices. They now they have the financial resources that make positive change possible. It's time for that change."

How to get involved

The agencies outline several ways concerned people can become involved as participants:

- Pray for Canadian families living in poverty so that Canadians might take responsibility for sharing our resources for the common good of all;
- As an act of sacrifice and solidarity, fast from dawn to dusk or by skipping a meal on Thursday September 27, or Thursday

October 4, 2001. If you wish, plan a community meal to collectively break the fast. You might invite other faith leaders and multi faith groups in your community;

- During that week, call your MP and provincial MPP/MLA to political conscience. Urge them to take action on child and family poverty. Ask how the federal government will follow up on its January Throne Speech commitment to ensure that no Canadian child lives in poverty. Ask what steps your provincial government is taking to alleviate child and family poverty in your province. If you prefer, write a letter or send them an e-mail. See www.campaign2000.ca for sample letters, concrete policy proposals, an update on government initiatives to deal with child poverty, and how to reach your MP/MLA/MPP.
- Encourage your congregation to participate in the "End Child Poverty Fast."

News Digest

Ogopogo the monster

KELOWNA, B.C. — The Kelowna Visitor and Convention Bureau is willing to give \$2 million to anyone who can provide indisputable evidence that a monster is living in nearby Okanagan Lake. Stories have been told for centuries about Ogopogo, a mysterious creature believed by some to live in the depths of the lake, states the *Globe and Mail*.

"There's certainly something there," says John Singleton, executive director of the bureau. His agency has taken out a \$2 million insurance policy from Lloyd's of London to fund the prize. Singleton admits the contest is a publicity stunt. "We wanted to bring notoriety to our region. We've had a lot of fun with it."

So far, the contest has drawn the attention of at least 30 broadcasters in six countries, and has received three entries. These include a five-minute videotape of the supposed monster, and sonar readings recorded by a Japanese TV production company last spring.

Sea turtle surprise

TORONTO — When the satellite-tracking signal from a huge sea-turtle disappeared, researchers thought its transmitter had fallen off. Wildcoast, a San Diego-based conservation group, had followed the movements of the 110-kg. East Pacific green turtle since December, reports the *Globe and Mail*.

Scientists spoke to poachers and learned the 50-year-old turtle had been barbecued in a Mexican village. They hope to retrieve their \$2,500 (US) transmitter.

"It's kind of a drag to track a turtle for months and find out someone ate it," said Wildcoast biologist Wallace Nichols.

Elvis is everywhere

CLEVELAND, Ohio — When Elvis Presley died in 1977, an estimated 35 impersonators were paying tribute to him, says American filmmaker John Paget. A decade later, the number had mushroomed to more than 1,000, reports the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. By 1997, there were more than 10,000, and today the Elvis population tops 35,000.

"If you compare this to world growth rates," notes Mr. Paget, "by 2020, Elvis impersonators will comprise one-third of the global population."